

1988

The 6669th Women's Army Corps Headquarters Platoon: Path Breakers in the Modern Military

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THE 6669th WOMEN'S ARMY CORPS HEADQUARTERS PLATOON
PATH BREAKERS in the MODERN MILITARY

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by

Peg Poeschl Siciliano

1988

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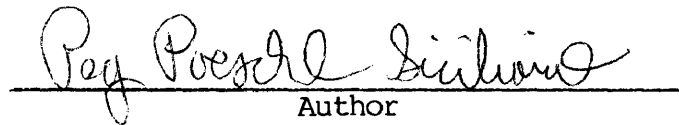
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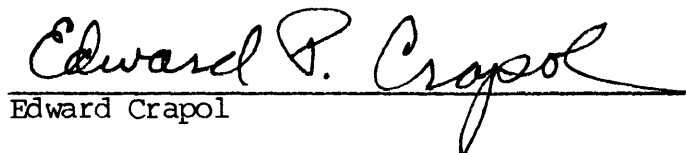
Master of Arts


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Approved, July 1988


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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated first to the women of the 6669th Central Postal Directory and to all military women who have risked their lives, and sometimes their reputations, for the sake of their country.

Secondly, it is dedicated to my family: my husband Stephen and son Stephen Christopher; my parents, Melvin and Faye Poeschl; and my in-laws, Nicholas, Barbara, Christopher, and Eileen Siciliano, who have all given me endless support and encouragement.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation to Professor Cam Walker for her patience, guidance and criticism throughout this project. I am also indebted to Professors James Whittenburg and Edward Crapol for their careful reading and criticism of the manuscript. Special thanks must be given to the Fifth Army Wacs and husbands who answered seemingly endless questionnaires and shared their letters, diaries, and memories with me.

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ABSTRACT

At the heart of this thesis is the story of the 6669th Women's Army Corps Headquarters Platoon, better known as the Fifth Army Wacs. The eighty-two women of this unit served their country in North Africa and Italy during World War II. Usually located ten to thirty-five miles from the front, they served closer to combat for a longer period of time than any other World War II American women's unit. The Fifth Army Wacs considered this service their patriotic duty, and they performed it heroically. One purpose of this study is to give these women deserved recognition.

When the Fifth Army Wacs chose to enlist they were purposely joining the fight against fascism. Although most did not, and still do not, consider themselves feminists, they were also, quite inadvertently, joining the fight against sexism. These women were forced to fight this dual offensive because the Second World War was the first time women were admitted into the military as full members. Thus, the second purpose of this study is to examine the movement of women into a male-dominated profession.

The Army has been called "the most traditionally masculine of all this country's institutions." This examination of the creation and development of the WAC, with the 6669th as a case study, reveals why the traditional spheres of "men's work" and "women's work" buckled and why such change met with great resistance. Obstacles to women's participation in male-dominated activities, and how women respond to such obstacles, are highlighted. Such a study should lead to a greater understanding of how sex-roles blur and finally disintegrate in society at large.

The study begins with an outline of women's involvement in the American military since before the Revolution and then moves to an in-depth account of the legislative history of the WAC's creation. The second and longest chapter is a history of the 6669th, based almost exclusively on questionnaires filled out by ex-platoon members, and on their letters, diaries and other private manuscripts. The third and final chapter is a statistical analysis. Fifth Army demographic characteristics are compared to those of the general population and, in some cases, to the entire WAC. Also, differences in Fifth Army educational and family backgrounds are examined to see how they affected these women's WAC experiences.

THE 6669th WOMEN'S ARMY CORPS HEADQUARTERS PLATOON
PATH BREAKERS in the MODERN MILITARY

INTRODUCTION

During World War II over a hundred thousand American women demanded and received full military status in the United States Army. This formal acceptance was a significant break with tradition, for in the past women had served only as civilian employees. An examination of the circumstances which allowed for this development, and of the actual experiences of some of the women involved, will reveal much about women's movement into male-dominated professions. As such movement is often met with strong resistance, and as such resistance severely hinders women's entrance into many occupations, this subject must be examined.

The American military has been called "the epitome of a male-dominated establishment" and the army "the most traditionally masculine of all this country's institutions." Women's Army Corps members (Wacs) ventured far into previously "all-male" territory. Those who served overseas (the army was the only military branch to send women abroad) ventured furthest. And of the 15 percent of Wacs sent abroad, the eighty-some women of the 6669th Central Postal Directory (WAC) Headquarters Platoon were unique.¹

Serving in North Africa and Italy, their unit was chosen for an experiment in the integration of women into tactical field units. This meant these women moved with Fifth Army Headquarters as the troops advanced, rather than being stationed in relatively permanent rear

areas. Usually located 10 to 35 miles from the front, this platoon served closer to combat for a longer period of time than any other women's unit.²

Fifth Army Wacs served in an atmosphere where the conventions of civilian life were stripped away, and the clashes between chivalry and chauvinism, tradition and reality, were sharply highlighted. Thus, the 6669th offers a superb example of what happens when women participate in activities usually perceived as suitable for "men only." Yet while the military has long been seen as a man's world, it has never really operated as an all-male organization. It has always depended on women for many essential services, and individual women have even participated in that ultimate military activity; combat. Until recently, however, the military had defined women's activities as marginal to its success, and Americans have accepted that interpretation. Such acceptance trivializes women's contributions which, indeed, have been significant.

Since before the Revolution, women have performed vital tasks for the nation's armed forces. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries thousands of women were camp followers who moved with the armies and provided vital logistical support. They cooked, did laundry, sewed, and provided medical services. Today these duties are often performed by military personnel. Camp followers, however, were civilians with no military status, although they experienced many of the same hardships as the fighting men.³

Some women actually fought alongside those men. Perhaps best known is the Molly Pitcher of Revolutionary War fame. She is usually portrayed as one woman, identified either as a Mary Ludwig Hays McCauley or a Margaret Corbin, who reacted heroically under unusual circumstances.

Tradition holds that while caring for the wounded, Mary (or Margaret) saw her husband fall beside his artillery piece. She quickly took his place until she, too, was wounded. According to historian Linda Grant DePauw, however, "Molly" was actually hundreds of women deliberately organized by Gen. George Washington to serve as auxiliary members of Continental gun crews. Guns of that era would overheat if water was not poured over them between shots. Women hauled the pitchers of water to the crews. The legend of the individual Molly Pitcher, while romantic and uplifting, obscures the integral part the "real Molly Pitchers" played in the war.⁴

Other women, represented by Deborah Sampson Gannett in the Revolution and Loreta Velasques in the Civil War, donned men's clothing and took part in face-to-face combat. In the Civil War many women also served as saboteurs, scouts, spies, and nurses. Like camp followers, nurses had no military status, but they were formally organized for military duties under civilian contract during both the Civil and Spanish American Wars.⁵

The Nurse Corps was established as a military auxiliary of the Army in 1901 and of the Navy in 1908. Maj. Gen. Jeanne Holm USAF (Ret.), in her book Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution (1982), asserts that this official acceptance was the first breakthrough for women insofar as a military profession was concerned. Yet even nurses, whose work was universally accepted as a proper female calling, did not receive full military status until 1944.⁶

Ironically, nurses, the first women to break into the military, were the last to receive full military status. The first were 13,000 women who formally enrolled in the Navy and Marine Corps as clerical workers

during World War I. Women performed much the same tasks for the Army, but under civilian contract. This difference reflected a legal loophole. The law concerning enlistment in the Army referred to "male persons," in the Navy to "citizens." Female participation was short-lived, as all military and civilian women were quickly released from service when the war ended. Even the Navy loophole was eliminated when the word "male" was inserted in the Naval Reserve Act of 1925.⁷

It would take the Second World War and several acts of Congress before women were given full and permanent military status in the American armed forces. By the end of that war women had become full members of all military branches, and they maintained that status after the war. Thus World War II was the turning point for women's participation in the armed forces.

The significance of the war did not lie, however, in the type of work that women performed. While a few noteworthy but token women held nontraditional positions, the vast majority of "GI Janes" held traditionally female jobs as clerks, telephone operators, medical assistants, and kitchen workers. What is significant about World War II is that for the first time women did that work as official members of the armed forces. Their contribution to an occupation previously viewed (however erroneously) as 'for men only' were finally publicly recognized. Also significant is the great opposition aroused by such recognition--even though it was more an acknowledgement of a preexisting reality than a great cultural innovation. It took a very special set of circumstances to overcome such opposition.

Several developments precipitated this pivotal change in the military's attitude toward its female workers. One was the emergence of

modern bureaucratic warfare--warfare that by 1944 required 35% of all soldiers to be assigned to clerical duties. Another was the feminization of such civilian occupations as typing and telephone work, not to mention nursing. The mid-twentieth century also saw a growing assumption that women should be allowed, indeed expected, to take part in most of this nation's public endeavors. Finally, the immediate postwar period witnessed the birth of the Cold War and American acceptance of a large peacetime army, and hence the growing militarization of society itself.⁸

During the 1940's the convergence of these ideological and practical trends under the stress of war caused the usually rigid boundaries between "men's work" and "women's work" to buckle. Examining the creation and development of the WAC, with the 6669th as a case study, can reveal why such changes occurred and why they met with great resistance. Obstacles to women's participation in male-dominated activities and how women respond to such obstacles will be highlighted. Such a study should lead to a greater understanding of how sex-roles blur and finally disintegrate in society at large.

FOOTNOTES

¹Nancy Goldman, "Woman in the Armed Forces," in Changing Women in a Changing Society, ed. Joan Huber (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 130; Helen Rogan, Mixed Company (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1981), p. 82.

Any discussion of women in the Army during World War II must note that there were two women's Army groups, and the distinction between them is crucial. The Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) existed from May, 1942, to September, 1943. At that time it was converted into the Women's Army Corps (WAC). The difference was that the first group served with the Army, whereas the second served in the Army. The distinction between serving with or serving in the Army was essentially legal, significant in regard to the benefits the women were entitled to receive during and after their military service. In this paper I will use the WAC designation when referring to events after the conversion, or when speaking of the Corps in general terms. I will use WAAC only when referring to events that occurred between May, 1942, and September, 1943.

The 6669th WAC Headquarters Platoon was originally designated the 182nd WAAC Headquarters Platoon--nearly all references to this group in papers and by the women themselves designates them either as Fifth Army Wacs or the 6669th, and I will follow that tradition.

²Mattie E. Treadwell, The Women's Army Corps (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Department of the Army, 1954), pp. 366-368.

When speaking of American women serving near World War II combat zones, mention must be made of the Army and Navy Nurse Corps. Some Army nurses served closer to the front lines than any Wac ever did, and Navy nurses were sent out on hospital ships--the only instance of any branch of the military other than the Army sending servicewomen out of the United States. Nurses were in a different situation than Wacs, however, as they were fulfilling a job that the entire society condoned as "women's work."

³Maj. Gen. Jeanne Holm, USAF (Ret.), Women in the Military: An Unfinished Revolution (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982), pp. 4-5.

⁴Ibid; Linda Grant DePauw, "Women in Combat: The Revolutionary War Experience," Armed Forces and Society, vol. 2, no. 21 (Winter 1981):216.

⁵Rogan, Mixed Company, p. 122; Holm, Women in the Military, p. 6.

⁶Holm, Women in the Military, p. 9.

⁷Kate A. Arbogast, "Women in the Armed Forces: A Rediscovered Resource," Military Review, (November 1973):12-14.

⁸D'Ann Campbell, "Women in This Man's Army: WAC and WAVE," draft of first chapter for forthcoming book, in her possession in Bloomington, Indiana, p. 1; Mary Lou Calene, Changing Acceptable Occupations for Military and Civilian Women: The Effects of Two World Wars (U.S. Department of Commerce: National Technical Information Service, 1975), p. 25; Mattie E. Treadwell, The Women's Army Corps, (Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Department of the Army, 1954), p. 16; Cynthia Enloe, Does Khaki Become You? The Militarisation of Women's Lives (Boston: South End Press, 1983), pp. 171-206.

CHAPTER I

CREATION OF THE WOMEN'S ARMY CORPS

Twenty-three-year-old Norma Reick of Toledo, Ohio, sat at the boxcar door and dangled her feet over the edge, watching as the Moroccan landscape inched by. She was four thousand miles from home, and the excitement of her adventure was wearing thin--but only temporarily. She and the fifty-eight women she was with had already been on the troop train for two days, eating C-rations, drinking warm water out of their canteens, and sleeping in shifts on the floor or on piles of barracks bags--if they could find a spot.¹

It was August, 1943, and World War II was raging across the face of the globe. These women journeying across North Africa comprised the 6669th Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) Headquarters Platoon. For the first time in history the Army was enlisting women. Indeed, Women's Army Auxiliary Corps members (Waacs) were actually being sent overseas.²

The women of the 6669th were on their way to join Lt. Gen. Mark Clark's Fifth Army in Mostaganem, Algeria. In November, 1943, the platoon followed that Army across the Mediterranean to Naples and eventually all the way up the boot of Italy. These women became "the hottest news of the Women's Army" by being the "'upforwardest' Wacs in the world."³ The chief reason for such fame was the platoon's constant proximity to the front lines.

These women were a critical but small part of a large female war

effort. During World War II over 350,000 women joined the four branches of the armed forces: 150,000 in the Army, 110,000 in the Navy, 17,600 Marines, and 10,000 in the Coast Guard. Throughout the war a full 90 percent of the 150,000 Wacs indicated a desire to be sent overseas; only 15 percent were so rewarded.⁴

For most Wacs duty abroad was seen as a privilege. As Mattie E. Treadwell indicates in her definitive history of the WAC, The Women's Army Corps: "The hope of selection for overseas service was always to remain one of the greatest morale factors in . . . Wac units."⁵ As a corporal in the WAC put it in 1944: "We practically drool when we hear of someone going overseas."⁶ While for men duty abroad was an almost inevitable requirement, for women assignment overseas tended to become a prize; for a man shipment meant probable combat service, for a woman merely the excitement of proximity to action.

These women dreaming of going abroad were in uniform on a strictly volunteer basis: American women have never been subject to a draft. Also, the vast majority of Wacs who served overseas did so as volunteers. By choosing a military life, particularly an overseas one, they were challenging long-held cultural norms as to women's 'proper place.' This challenge aroused a lot of hostility. It also caused significant anxiety for those who passed the laws which enabled women to so serve: the members of the United States Congress.⁷

Historian William Chafe explains the source of such anxiety in his book The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970. He points out that society restricts the sexes to separate spheres of activity. Some activities are to be engaged in by males, others by females, and rarely do these spheres overlap or shift.

Changes in these spheres often generate great resistance and usually occur only during times of intense societal stress. War is one of those times.⁸

The stresses of World War II led Congress and the American people to accept legislation creating the women's military services and sending some of those women overseas. But such acceptance came grudgingly. Norma Reick and the women journeying across North Africa were still looking forward to their role in the great struggle between the Allies and the Axis. Their presence was the result of a great battle which had already occurred on the floor of the United States Congress.

The Legislation

Congress seriously debated two bills on the establishment of a women's reserve for the Army. Representative Edith Nourse Rogers (R., MA) was the primary sponsor of both. The first one, H.R. 6293, proposed that a Women's Army Auxiliary Corps be created to serve with (not in) the Army. It had the strong backing of the War Department and the Army, and represented a compromise between Representative Rogers' hopes and the military's desires.⁹

Rogers hoped to see the creation of a women's corps whose members would enjoy full military status. During World War I she had seen the problems encountered by women who volunteered for Army work in France and who did so outside the framework of military discipline and protection. Frustrated by her inability to secure veteran's compensation for these women after the war, she had resolved that if women ever faced the need to serve their country again, they would do so in an official capacity. Rogers believed World War II would create both

such a need for women's services and a demand by women that their services be used. She was proven correct on both counts.¹⁰

The War Department decided as early as 1939 that optimum efficiency in prosecuting the coming war would require some use of women. Like Rogers, Department personnel looked back on World War I and saw the confusion and inefficiency which accompanied Army use of civilian women, particularly overseas. They decided that women should be organized under formal military control and directed the Army to draw up appropriate plans.¹¹

Those plans indicate that the Regular Army only reluctantly acknowledged this practical need for a women's reserve. A 1941 memo from the Army's Assistant Chief of Staff stated: "The sole purpose of this study is to permit the organization of a woman's force along lines which meet with War Department approval, so that when it is forced upon us, as it undoubtedly will be, we shall be able to run it our way."¹² "Our way" was that the women's corps would be an auxiliary to, not a part of, the Army. In fact, the Army supported the creation of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps precisely "to avert the pressure to admit women to actual membership in the Army."¹³

Pressure to place women fully in the Army did indeed exist. Representative Rogers' opinions were the best known; however, there were rumblings from as high up as the White House (from Eleanor Roosevelt, not the President). Aside from concern about official pressure to form a women's corps, the War Department was also watchful of the many private women's groups dedicating themselves to para-military activities.¹⁴

As the war in Europe spread, women's groups dedicated to defense

training sprang up across the country. The Green Guards of Washington, D.C., the Women's Defense Cadets of America in New York, and the Women Flyers of America were but a few of these organizations. Well-respected women's organizations such as the New York League of Business and Professional Women were calling for a national registration of women for defense needs. As Rogers had foreseen, women were demanding a chance to serve their country. The Army's distaste for women began to fade before the specter of a private "women's army" or, worse yet, women actually in the Army. Thus it came to support formation of a women's auxiliary.¹⁵

In any event, Army reservations about women were outweighed by the War Department's perception that womanpower was the best solution to its manpower shortage. As the war progressed, the number of men available for combat was greatly restricted by demands for clerical workers. By 1941, Chief of Staff Gen. George C. Marshall, the highest ranking official in the Army, was in full agreement with the War Department. He was well aware of eventual bureaucratic needs and realized that in the civilian world clerical work was the monopoly of women. One of his subordinates later recalled Marshall asking "why we should try to train men in a specialty such as typing or telephone work which in civilian life has been taken over completely by women; this he [Marshall] felt, was uneconomical and a waste of time which we didn't have." Marshall also believed that efficient Army use of women required their systematic organization and training under military control.¹⁶

Thus, in the spring of 1941 the Army moved to establish that control by forming a women's reserve. Appropriate legislation was introduced in the House by Representative Rogers, but this ill-fated bill stalled in the Bureau of the Budget. She introduced identical legislation, H.R.

6293, soon after Pearl Harbor. This bill reached the floors in both the House and the Senate in the spring of 1942.¹⁷

A chief military concern during discussion of the WAAC proposal was that the Army retain its right to send women abroad. As Treadwell points out: "The whole idea of the Corps had originally been thought of by the War Department as a means of preventing the confusion of overseas service that occurred in World War I."¹⁸ Close examination of WAAC legislation reveals that the Army anticipated Congressional opposition to such deployment and tailored its bill accordingly. H.R. 6293 does not even mention overseas service for women. Given Treadwell's theory about the military's primary purpose for supporting a women's corps, such an omission would appear to be a gross oversight. In fact, it was a deliberate attempt to avoid discussion of an issue that could threaten the entire package. Careful reading of two clauses supports this contention.

Section two of the bill states that the Director of the Corps "shall operate and administer the Corps in accordance with normal military procedures of command and administration and such regulations as may be presented by the Secretary of War; shall make recommendations as to plans and policies concerning the employment, training, supply, welfare and discipline of the Corps; and shall perform other such duties as may be presented by the Secretary" Section 13 states, "The Corps shall be administered by the Secretary [of War] through the channels of command of the Army, pursuant to such regulations as the Secretary may promulgate."¹⁹ The broad authority delegated to the Secretary by these clauses would enable him to ship women overseas. Yet despite efforts to circumvent the issue, legislators sought to clarify it.

On March 17, 1942, Representative Joseph P. O'Hara (R., MN) offered the following amendment to H.R. 6293: "No member of this Corps shall be required to serve outside the continental limits of the United States unless such member shall consent to such foreign service in writing."²⁰ His purpose was not really to deny women the right to serve abroad, but rather to force the legislature and the Army to state their intentions one way or the other. The discussion surrounding O'Hara's amendment made it obvious that the legislators were not in agreement as to whether the bill allowed women to serve overseas or not. In part this confusion arose from wavering by the bill's supporters.

For example, in testifying before the House Military Affairs Committee, Col. Ira Swift of the General Staff had stated when "asked if it was intended to send women into foreign service . . . [that] he did not want to commit the Army. It might be, he said, that women would be sent to American defense posts."²¹ Rogers read a letter from Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson which revealed only that "a company would normally be stationed at a large post, camp, station or other zone of the interior installation . . ."²² Thus, statements by the bill's supporters were as ambiguous as the wording of the bill itself.

This ambiguity eventually was clarified by two discussions: one on O'Hara's amendment and the other on an issue brought up by Representative Jack Nichols (D., OK). He was concerned with the need to provide military benefits and protection for women serving overseas (the status of women in relation to such benefits was unclear because H.R. 6293 provided for Waacs to serve with, not in, the Army).

The consensus after these discussions was that "anyone who votes on this bill wants to vote on the assumption that these volunteers can be

sent with any expeditionary force to any part of the world, and they will be expected to go."²³ Although O'Hara's amendment was rejected, it served its purpose by clarifying the issue. As it stood, women indeed could be sent abroad.

With the issue of overseas service clarified, Congress passed H.R. 6293. The House voted for it 249 to 86 with 96 not voting, and the Senate 38 to 27 with 31 not voting. President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the bill on May 14, 1942. Representative Rogers and the Army had been unsuccessful in covering-up their intentions to deploy women abroad, but successful in retaining the Army's right to do so. At the same time, however, H.R. 6293 created a paradox.²⁴

It soon became apparent that the military's goal of sending women overseas conflicted with its goal of keeping women in an auxiliary status. Because Waacs were not officially in the Army, they were not eligible for many of the military benefits men received when they were sent abroad. They did not receive extra overseas pay, were not eligible for government life insurance, and would probably lose their civilian life insurance if stationed in a war zone. If sick or wounded they would not receive veteran's hospitalization, if killed would get no death gratuity, and if captured would not be entitled to the rights of prisoners of war. Until these failings could be rectified, the Director of the Corps refused to recommend sending Waacs abroad.²⁵

While the Army initially seemed unaware of this contradiction, Representative Rogers never had been. In fact, it was a prime reason for her hope that the women's reserve would receive full military status. By the spring of 1941, however, she had concluded that the War Department and Army were adamant concerning the Corps' auxiliary

status. She also concluded that military backing of WAAC legislation was essential to its passage. So in exchange for that backing she agreed to sponsor a bill which fell short of her original hopes.

The military's failure to anticipate the shortcomings of H.R. 6293 made the passage of additional WAC legislation essential. The Army apparently decided that the disadvantages of having women as auxiliaries caused more trouble than keeping them technically out of the military was worth. Consequently, the military fully backed Rogers' 1943 efforts on behalf of S. 495. Once approved it converted the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps into the Women's Army Corps. Unlike Waacs, Wacs served in, not with, the Army and thus had full military status. That status gave Wacs essentially the same benefits as non-combat soldiers.

On July 1, 1943, President Roosevelt signed S. 495. The women of the 6669th would be going overseas and doing so as full-fledged soldiers. Simple passage of H.R. 6293 and S. 495 had assured that. Yet far more important to the life they would lead were the attitudes revealed by Congressional debate over the bills. That debate was based both on ideology and practicality, and reveals a lot about the conflicts which occur when women advance into men's sphere of activities.²⁶

Debate: the Opposition

Two fundamental issues underlay the entire WAC debate. The first asked just how serious the Army's need for Wacs really was. The second pitted women's right to serve their country in uniform against traditional restrictions of women to the roles of wife, mother, and homemaker. Several concerns were discussed in the context of these issues, including age limits, recruiting methods, discipline,

compensation, duties, racial discrimination, and, of course, overseas service. Opponents and supporters alike bolstered their positions with both practical and ideological arguments. But whereas ideology was the key to opponents' attitudes, practicality was the bedrock of the supporters' position.

Practically speaking, WAC opponents questioned the Army's need to employ women as clerks, telephone operators, and the like on several counts. Representatives Butler B. Hare (D., SC) and Frank E. Hook (D., MI) both cited the availability of various groups of men, who while not quite fit for combat, would be appropriate for the duties in question. These included World War I veterans, conscientious objectors, and 4-F's.²⁷

Other legislators conceded the logic of using women for traditionally female work but questioned the need to put them in uniform. Senator Francis T. Maloney (D., CT) and Representative Jennings Randolph (D., WV) both stated that women should be able and expected to serve their country but should do so as civilians. They discounted the Army's need to control such workers by citing the contributions of the Red Cross, civil service, and various volunteer organizations.²⁸

Representative Clare E. Hoffman (R., MI) also expressed his belief that the problems of designing new uniforms, providing separate barracks, and tempering Army discipline would outweigh the benefits of using women. Furthermore, opponents felt sending women overseas would be an inefficient and unfair allocation of government resources. Women would use valuable shipping space, claim the time of medical professionals who should be caring for "the wounded, crippled and

maimed," and later would bankrupt the nation with demands for overseas service compensation.²⁹

Opponents' most eloquent arguments, however, were ideological, based on the traditional belief that men should do the protecting and women be the protected. These legislators feared that passage of WAC legislation would be an indication that something was wrong with the men of America. Representative Hare stated, "I think it is a reflection on the manhood of the country to have the war declaring body of this nation at this hour pass a law inviting the women of this country to join the armed forces to win a battle."³⁰ Representative Andrew L. Somers (D., NY) reinforced these sentiments:

A woman's army to defend the United States of America. Think of the humiliation. What has become of the manhood of America, that we have to call upon the women to do what has ever been the duty of men? The thing is so revolting to me, to my sense of Americanism, to my sense of decency that I just cannot discuss it in a vein that I think legislation should be discussed on the floor of the House.³¹

Concern was also expressed for the well-being of the women themselves. Representative John H. Folger (D., NC) supported an amendment to keep women stateside "on account of that pedestal on which I have placed her [the American woman] and which position she has occupied always."³² That amendment's sponsor, Representative Beverley M. Vincent (D., KY) expressed similar feelings about American women, that "God created them a little lower than the angels."³³

Yet Vincent also warned "when you send girls over there remember that with our soldiers you have Arabs, you have Senegalese, you have all kinds of people in the service and they are going to be thrown in contact with them. There is [sic] bound to be complications."³⁴ He

spoke of military wives who pleaded with him, for their sakes, to do what he could to prevent the women's corps from being sent overseas. Apparently these wives and Representatives were more than a little concerned that America's "near-angels" did not have a very firm grip on their pedestals.³⁵

It was the old story of the Virgin and the Whore. On the one hand, American womanhood was pure and innocent, not to be subjected to the brutalities of military life. On the other, deep inside, women were whores. Once let down from their pedestals they would run wild, seducing soldiers left and right. Wac morals were particularly suspect.

As Representative Vincent put it: "I say to you that if they [American women] had the right to sit in these seats this afternoon and vote on this bill it would not pass, because the good women in your district and my district would not support a measure of this kind."³⁶ Apparently a "good" woman would not support the WAC, let alone choose to serve in it. Thus, the voluntary nature of the Corps made its members automatically suspect. Americans were unnerved by the rapid social changes occurring all around them during the war, and the Corps served as a lightening rod for many traditional fears.

Movement of women into a nontraditional occupation such as the military, a step which violated the separate spheres of male and female activity so well described by Chafe, was particularly unnerving. Some felt such moves threatened the natural order and very stability of American society. In her book Mixed Company, Helen Rogan examines the experiences of women in the All-Volunteer Force of the 1970's. Her explanation of why people react so strongly to women in the military is as applicable to the 1940's as to the 1970's.

Rogan believes that many people see sexual division of labor as biologically determined. They feel there are genetic and hormonal reasons why men are leaders and women are followers. Even people who do not express themselves in such scientific terms may feel that separate spheres are dictated by some immutable natural law, somewhat akin to the law of gravity. Such people can see no justification for disturbing a balance which has been maintained since the beginning of recorded history and in cultures throughout the world. The very existence of such divisions of labor is used as proof that men should continue doing what men do and women doing what women do.³⁷

The problem with 'the way things have always been' is that separate spheres relegate women to activities which are afforded little power, income or prestige. Women do not receive money or power for fulfilling the roles of homemaker and childrearer, no matter how important society claims those roles to be. Most men, no matter how much praise they lavish on such roles, would be unwilling to take them on in place of their work in the paid labor force.

Exclusion from 'men's work' does more than simply deny women a 'man's paycheck' or a man's sense of power. Depending upon the activity, it denies her much, much more. The military is a prime example of this, as Jill Laurie Goodman points out in her 1979 article on "Women, War, and Equality: An Examination of Sex Discrimination in the Military," Women's Rights Law Reporter. According to Goodman, besides economic opportunity, the military offers its members upward mobility, educational opportunities, veteran's benefits, and veteran's preference in public employment.³⁸

It also offers first-class citizenship. Goodman explains that

"participation in the military life of a nation is a unique political responsibility . . . [the] ultimate act of patriotism . . . The ideas of citizenship and military service have been intertwined historically."³⁹ The latest example of this connection was the extension of suffrage to eighteen-year-olds in 1971, a movement whose rallying cry was, "If we're old enough to go to war, we're old enough to vote."

Society has been willing to relegate women to second-class citizenship precisely because it feels men are better able to handle important roles of power and prestige than women--be it the role of soldier or the role of politician. According to anthropologist Margaret Mead, however, it is not that whatever is important is done by men; it is that whatever men do is considered important. She found that

"Men may cook, or weave or dress dolls or hunt humming-birds, but if such activities are appropriate occupations for men, then the whole society, men and women alike, votes them as important. When the same occupations are performed by women, they are regarded as less important."⁴⁰

If true, this theory could partially explain male, if not female, hostility to women's entrance into formerly male occupations. Much of a person's self-worth is based on his work. If a man (even subconsciously) feels his work is important because it is 'man's work,' then its prestige will be lowered if women can do it. And so will his own self-image.

Of all the professions which have been considered 'men's work,' the military has probably produced the greatest taboo against the use of women. Many scientists feel fighting is a male occupation because men are hormonally predisposed to be more aggressive than women. Not all agree. Some feel it is only in the lower animals that male aggression

is directly linked to hormones. In the higher primates aggression seems to be defined by culture, not biology.⁴¹

If exclusion of women from the military is cultural and not biological, why did it develop? Rogan indicates "that feminists refer to male jealousy of women's childbearing function, which turned pregnancy and childbearing into a 'handicap', and led men to . . . overcompensate through war . . . warfare was, in the past, one of the only ways men could use their size and strength to show their superiority and maintain real power."⁴²

Apparently women in the military threaten not only the prestige of a certain occupation, but also the very manhood of those who choose it as a profession. It is not only feminists who hold this opinion. A graduate of the last all-male Naval Academy class (1979) states:

Historically, . . . the academies and a few other areas of the military--Marine Corps boot camp, air borne training--have provided a ritualistic rite of passage into manhood. Women now have a full range of choice, from the totally female--motherhood--to what was once the totally male--the Academies, for example. Males in the society feel stripped, symbolically and actually . . . Where in this country can someone go to find out if he is a man? And where can someone who knows he is a man go to celebrate his masculinity?⁴³

Men's need to "celebrate their masculinity" and vague fears about "upsetting the balance of nature" are possible explanations for people's negative reactions to women in the military. Whether in 1981 or in 1941, however, people probably were not aware of why they were so unnerved--but indeed many were. And not only Representatives.

Public Opinion

During the 1940's the American public was far from unanimous in its support of the WAC. A 1943 Gallup poll of women eligible to serve in

the Corps showed that only 8 percent would enlist simply because they were qualified to do so. A full 37 percent indicated that "being drafted" was the only thing that could make them join, and 11 percent stated that "nothing would make me enlist."⁴⁴

An article in The American Mercury explains some of the reasons women were reluctant to join. Ruth E. Peters, a soldier's wife and university graduate, explained in "Why I Don't Join the WACS" that women were discouraged by the thought of military training and regimentation, the possibility of bad job assignments, the Army caste system, and the feeling that they could serve the war effort just as well in non-military work. Nevertheless, she felt the biggest reason for women's lack of interest was "that the average man doesn't want his woman in uniform."⁴⁵

This last statement was certainly true. A 1943 Army survey of male military personnel asked the question: "If you had a sister 21 years old or older, would you like to see her join the WAAC or not?" Forty percent gave negative replies while only 25 percent welcomed the possibility. Reasons for negative replies were much the same as those listed in The American Mercury. Mail from overseas indicated even worse attitudes, with nearly 100 percent of the soldier's comments on the WAC being negative.⁴⁶

A 1943 letter from a Captain in North Africa is typical. Writing to a female relative he stated: "Incidentally, I don't want you to join any WAACS or WAVES or anything associated with overseas service. I'm disgusted with our American girls in the service. Maybe some of them would be a better way to put it. I like to think some of them are decent, clean, upright and possessed of high morals. They live with

officers 1/2 or 3/4 of the night and then scam to their quarters . . ."⁴⁷ Official investigation of hundreds of such comments revealed the vast majority to be totally unfounded; still they did affect public opinion. By mid-1943, America's attitude concerning the WAC was decidedly negative, and that had a disastrous impact on WAC recruitment.

This decline in enlistments was especially upsetting to WAC officials, as women's initial reaction to the WAAC had been enthusiastic. When the press released information on the proposed Corps in January of 1942, Representative Rogers' office was swamped with letters of support. One woman exclaimed: "Let the men slackers stay home and knit sweaters for us--we look better in them anyway."⁴⁸ In a more restrained tone a woman from New Mexico wrote:

I see by the papers you are urging the House to give us a chance to work for America, too. By us, I mean the young women of America who want so much to do war work but are unable to do much, as we have to make our own living. We are young, strong, and anxious to do what we can. I sincerely hope you can make the men see it our way. As you say, the women of England are doing a tremendous job. And so can we.⁴⁹

This enthusiasm grew. Within ten days of the Corps' establishment on May 14, 1942, WAAC officials had received thousands of letters, telegrams, and telephone calls from women wanting to join or receive information. Members of Congress, the War Department, and newspapers across the country were also deluged with requests.⁵⁰

Initial recruiting was so successful that the WAC had more women than it could handle. In the New York area the first call for officer candidates resulted in 8,000 requests for applications. Although only 2,000 were completed, the Army was only looking for 60 candidates. Competition for the first auxiliary (enlisted women's) class in August,

1942, was almost as fierce. But in early 1943, the flow of volunteers nearly stopped. In part this slowdown reflected the fear of Army life described in The American Mercury. Army officials, however, determined that the two major causes of WAC recruitment problems were negative public (especially male) attitudes and civilian apathy.⁵¹

Even Wacs loyal to the Corps were hesitant in encouraging women to enlist. A 1944 letter stated:

You make up your own mind what you want to do about joining up with the WAC . . . I'm not homesick and I'm not sorry for myself, but I've had the biggest disappointment of my life. You know I loved basic training with all the hard work, discipline, and things I felt I was "taking" in order that I might become a good soldier. I still do not mind having to sleep in an upper bunk with few comforts I had at home . . . I have no complaints about the requirements and restraints . . . but the biggest disappointment is the utter disrespect for the personnel of the WAC. At first I was indignant, but lately . . . instead of being a proud soldier, I am embarrassed that I am a Wac. The soldiers have absolutely no respect for us.⁵²

Many patriotic women otherwise willing to serve were discouraged by such attitudes. On the other hand, many women were simply apathetic to the whole idea. A 1943 Gallup poll of eligible women and their parents showed that 86 percent were aware of the Army's need for Wacs but felt that "sure it's important, but let someone else do it."⁵³ Such apathy applied not only to military service but to war work in general. By January, 1944, the Office of War Information concluded there were five and one-half million idle women available for industrial or military service. Women knew of the need but were not willing to help-out.⁵⁴

This apathy does not necessarily indicate that women were less willing than men to serve their country. It must be remembered that men entered the military, or civilian war work, under the threat of the

draft. All women's war work was voluntary. In December, 1943, the Director of the WAC reported there were 400,000 to 500,000 Army jobs that could be done by women, but quickly added: "We've never been able to get a volunteer army of men that big."⁵⁵

The government did give some consideration to drafting women for both war work and military service. In fact, polls showed that, under certain circumstances, the American public strongly supported the draft of women into 'this man's Army.' A 1943 Gallup survey asked: "The Army can either draft 300,000 single women ages 21-35 for the WACS for non-fighting jobs, or it can draft the same number of married men with families for the same work. Which plan do you prefer?" Results showed 78 percent of those polled supported the draft of single women.⁵⁶ The consensus of civilian and military officials alike, however, continued to be that a women's draft was unnecessary.

Unnecessary even though high military officials, if not the regular rank and file soldier, had quickly become aware of their need for Waacs. By May, 1943, commanding officers had placed requests for 500,000 women, and Generals of overseas theaters of operations had asked for 18,810. A March, 1943, Time article reported that in most clerical work one Waac was easily doing the work of one-and-a-half male soldiers, and commanders liked those statistics.⁵⁷

When officials actually worked with Wacs they soon became Corps supporters. As Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower stated: "During the time I have had Wacs under my command they have met every test and task assigned them . . . Their contributions in efficiency, skill, spirit and determination are immeasurable."⁵⁸ Lt. Gen. Ira C. Eaker stated in 1945 that "women made, in my opinion, the best soldiers in the war."⁵⁹

As early as 1941 Representative Rogers, Secretary of War Stimson, and Chief of Staff Marshall all had foreseen the usefulness of a women's reserve. That usefulness--the Army's practical need for these women--would become the key to Congressional support for WAC legislation. Nevertheless, like WAC opponents, WAC supporters used both practical and ideological arguments.

Debate: the Supporters

Congressional proponents of the Corps were well aware that a large number of American women wanted a chance to serve their country in uniform, and many legislators felt they should have the right to do so. Representative Overton Brooks (D., LA) declared, "I think it is a very fine thing that we undertake to establish this Corps at this time and to give these women in America who are just as anxious as the men to do their bit toward winning the war and crushing the axis power all over the earth--giving them their opportunity to be of some real service."⁶⁰

This argument was the ideological counterpoint to Representative Folger's desire to keep American women on their pedestals. This battle between the right of women to serve their country and the need to maintain the traditional values of the nation could have continued forever without deciding the fate of either piece of WAC legislation. In reality, that fate hung not on ideology but on practicality. As Representative Charles A. Plumley (R., VT) put it late in House debate on H.R. 6293: "Let us get rid of all this flag waving and Army regulations and all this bologna. Does not the gentleman know, just as well as I do, that you can not win this war without these women?"⁶¹

Corps backers did indeed realize that military need for women to

help win the war was their ace-in-the-hole, and they willingly played it. They frequently noted War Department backing for WAC legislation. Representative Andrew T. May (D., KY) presented a letter of support from Secretary Stimson which stated, in part, that there were many duties "for which women are better fitted than men, and the employment of women on such duty would increase efficiency and release men for more intensive work or combat service. In order that a maximum benefit might be obtained from the proposed auxiliary corps it is essential that its organization and employment be carefully planned and key personnel properly trained . . ."62

May and other backers, such as Representative Robert E. Thomasen (D., TX) were also fond of listing specific jobs from which able-bodied men should be released for combat. These included work as clerks, cooks, bakers, telephone operators, librarians and tellers.⁶³

As Representative Rogers had surmised earlier, these facts and particularly open military insistence that women were essential to the war effort, turned the tide. As Representative Earl C. Michener (R., MI) flatly stated, "I shall vote for this bill solely because the War Department has appeared before the Military Affairs Committee, insisting that the national safety at this time depends on this legislation."⁶⁴

Opponents of the bill agreed that Department pressure was the key to its eventual success. Representative Hoffman declared:

You ask, am I going to vote for this bill. What else can I do? If I vote against any bill that is requested by the Administration, the War Department . . . I will be classified as one who opposes the war effort. But I venture to suggest that if we could get a secret expression or vote on this bill the Members of the House would turn the bill down today or at any other time it came up, because from what I have heard as Members

expressed themselves privately, they do not believe it will actually aid in the war effort. More than one Member has said in substance that he would vote for the bill, but he hoped the Creator would forgive him.⁶⁵

If Representative Hoffman is to be taken at his word, the Creator was quite busy in 1942 and 1943, for both H.R. 6293 and S. 495 passed Congress by comfortable margins. Thus, women were put in uniform during World War II primarily because the right people were convinced that a women's corps was an essential part of a well-oiled war machine. The simple right of women to serve their country, while acknowledged by some, was not the elemental force behind the birth of the WAC.

In his book The American Woman, Chafe suggests that any social change is affected either by a shift in ideology or by some realistic, practical need:

The first [theory] is based on the premise that ideology is the crucial variable affecting the process of change. According to this argument, people act on the basis of their values or beliefs. Hence a change in society can come about only by persuading the public that a set of values is wrong and must be modified. The second position . . . operates on the assumption that attitudes, especially those involving emotional matters such as race or sex, almost never change except for under compulsion and that behavior is a more promising fulcrum for change than attitudes . . . converted by fait accompli.⁶⁶

Acceptance of women in the military resulted from a fait accompli, not from an ideological shift. Most WAC supporters had no perception of themselves as initiators of some cultural revolution. Even backers who cited women's right to be in uniform spoke of them performing traditional 'female' tasks like typing and cooking. Representative May claimed that "the reason women of America are so strong for this bill is that it is one of their ways of protecting the home, which they know is their citadel."⁶⁷ During the 1940's, backers of women in the military

spoke almost universally of what women could do for the armed forces, not of what the armed forces could do for women. And most of them expected women's work in the military to be for the duration only.

Representative Michener commented that "the necessities of the hour can be the only justification for legislation of this character. This is a war emergency measure and should not be permanent legislation. We in this country do not want to so militarize our people as to make it necessary to maintain a standing army in peacetime, composed in any part of the womanhood of the land."⁶⁸

Of course, that is precisely what happened, whatever the intentions of those who voted the WAC into being. After the war the Corps was made a permanent branch of the Army. Wacs retained full military status, but as a separate women's organization with separate units, training, and special WAC officers to administer the Corps. In 1978 even those distinctions disappeared. The WAC was disestablished and women fully integrated into the Regular Army. Today female soldiers comprise over 10 percent of Army personnel, one of the largest percentages in the world.⁶⁹

Although the absolute number of women who have served in the Army is small, their significance far outweighs their numbers. The military was, and often still is, seen as an all-male world. Just by wearing a uniform women challenge that myth. Study of the establishment of the WAC has shown the circumstances under which such challenges occur. Examining the experiences of the 6669th WAC Headquarters Platoon will show what can happen to the women who form the front-lines of that challenge.

FOOTNOTES

¹Norma Reick, Questionnaire filled out in April, 1983, original now in possession of Peg Poeschl Siciliano, Traverse City, Michigan.

²Unless otherwise footnoted, all information on the 6669th Headquarters Platoon is taken from "Platoon History," a manuscript written in the mid-1940's by various members of the 6669th, original now in the possession of Lt. Col. Miriam Butler (Ret.) of Reno, Nevada. In discussing the Women's Army Corps, the fully capitalized acronyms "WAAC" and "WAC" refer to the military organizations themselves. The acronyms "Waac" and "Wac," with only the initial letter capitalized, refer to the members of those organizations.

³"Platoon History," p. 5; "Corporal Jessup 'Hello Girl' Behind the Lines with Fifth Army in Italy," Bainbridge Review (Bremerton, Washington), 25 August 1944.

⁴D'Ann Campbell, "Women in This Man's Army: WAC and WAVE," draft of first chapter for forthcoming book, in her possession in Bloomington, Indiana, p. 35; "90% in the WAAC Ask Duty Abroad," New York Times, 9 September 1942, p. 18.

⁵Mattie E. Treadwell, The Women's Army Corps (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Department of the Army, 1954), p. 579.

⁶"Army & Navy: Women: Hobby's Army," Time, 17 January 1944, p. 58.

⁷While it is true that 90% of Wacs wanted to go overseas, not all who were sent wanted to go. Because of the scarcity of shipping space, only highly skilled women were sent overseas. Thus, Wacs with special clerical or language skills were sometimes sent abroad even if they did not want to go.

⁸William Chafe, The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic and Political Roles, 1920-1970 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 6-10.

⁹U.S., Congress, House, debate on H.R. 6293, 77th Congr., 2nd sess., 17 March 1942, Congressional Record 88:2580-2608; U.S., Congress, Senate, debate on H.R. 6293, 77th Congr., 2nd sess., 27 April 1942, Congressional Record 88:3704-3711; U.S., Congress, Senate, debate on H.R. 6293, 77th Congr., 2nd sess., 12 May 1942, Congressional Record 88:4085-4093.

¹⁰U.S., Congress, House, 77th Congr., 1st sess., 28 May 1941, Congressional Record 87:4531; U.S., Congress, House, 77th Congr., 2nd sess., 17 March 1942, Congressional Record 88:2580.

¹¹Treadwell, The Women's Army Corps, pp. 15-16.

¹²Ibid., p. 17.

¹³Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁵U.S., Congress, House, 77th Congr., 1st sess., 7 March 1941, Congressional Record, 87:2014; "Cadets Organize Manhattan Unit," New York Times, 1 December 1940, sec. II, p. 3; "Group Training For War Flying," New York Times, 22 December 1940, sec. II, p. 4; "Women Seek to Enroll For U.S. Defense. Told Their Registration May Be Ordered," New York Times, 10 September 1940, p. 14.

¹⁶Campbell, "Women in This Man's Army," p. 35; Treadwell, The Women's Army Corps, p. 20; U.S., Congress, House, 77th Congr., 2nd sess., 17 March 1942, Congressional Record 88:2582.

¹⁷This bill was numbered H.R. 4906, and was nearly identical to H.R. 6293. For debate on H.R. 4906 see: U.S., Congress, House, 77th Congr., 1st sess., 28 May 1941, Congressional Record 87:4531-4533.

¹⁸Treadwell, The Women's Army Corps, p. 96.

¹⁹U.S., Congress, House, 77th Congr., 2nd sess., 17 March 1942, Congressional Record 88:2598 and 2606.

²⁰Ibid., p. 2604.

²¹"Army Backs Bill For Women's Corps," New York Times, 21 January 1942, p. 14.

²²U.S., Congress, House, 77th Congr., 2nd sess., 17 March 1942, Congressional Record 88: 2585-2586.

²³Ibid., p. 2599.

²⁴Ibid., p. 2608; U.S., Congress, Senate, 77th Congr., 2nd sess., 13 May 1942, Congressional Record 88:4093.

²⁵Treadwell, The Women's Army Corps, p. 96. It should be noted that 200 Waacs did serve overseas before the conversion to the WAC. They had been sent at the urgent request of Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, being fully aware of the shortcomings of their legal situation, and going on a purely voluntary basis.

²⁶U.S., Congress, Senate, 78th Congr., 1st sess., 2 July 1943, Congressional Record 89:6997.

²⁷U.S., Congress, House, 77th Congr., 2nd sess., 17 March 1942, Congressional Record 88:2584 and 2606.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 2606; U.S., Congress, Senate, 77th Congr., 2nd sess., 12 May 1942, Congressional Record 88:4090.

²⁹U.S., Congress, House, 77th Congr., 2nd sess., 17 March 1942, Congressional Record 88:2592; U.S., Congress, House, 78th Congr., 1st sess., 27 May 1943, Congressional Record 89:4994 and 4996.

³⁰U.S., Congress, House, 77th Congr., 2nd sess., 17 March 1942, Congressional Record 88:2606.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²U.S., Congress, House, 78th Congr., 1st sess., 27 May 1943, Congressional Record 89:4999.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 4994.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 4996.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 4994.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷Helen Rogan, Mixed Company (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1981), pp. 70-75.

³⁸Jill Laurie Goodman, "Women, War, and Equality: An Examination of Sex Discrimination in the Military," Women's Rights Law Reporter, vol. 5, no. 4 (Summer 1979): 244-245.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 246.

⁴⁰Margaret Mead, Male and Female (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1967), p. 159.

⁴¹Rogan, Mixed Company, p. 72.

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁴³Congressional Research Service, Women in the Armed Forces: Proceedings of a CRS Seminar Held on November 2, 1979 and Selected Readings (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 1980), p. 76.

⁴⁴"Information Pertaining to the Women's Army Corps," 10 May 1944, Modern Military Records Division, Army G-1 WAC Historical Background Info. File 1942-1949, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁵Ruth E. Peters, "Why I Don't Join the WACS," The American Mercury, September 1944, pp. 293-297.

⁴⁶Treadwell, The Women's Army Corps, pp. 170-171, 373.

⁴⁷United States Military Censorship Sheet BCD 3-552, Modern Military Records Division, Army G-1 WAC Historical Background Info. File 1942-1949, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁸"Women Want To Join For War But Run Into Some Skepticism," Newsweek, 12 January 1942, p. 23.

⁴⁹U.S., Congress, House, 77th Congr., 2nd sess., 17 March 1942, Congressional Record 88:2583.

⁵⁰"Letters, Telegrams, Phone Calls Pour In From Thousands Seeking to Join WAAC," New York Times, 26 May 1942, p. 18.

⁵¹"It's A Grim Fight To Be An Officer," New York Times, 6 June 1942, p. 8; "6,000 Ask to Join WAAC," New York Times, 15 August 1942, p. 7; "Women: The WAACs Arrive," Time, 22 March 1943, p. 50.

⁵²Treadwell, The Women's Army Corps, p. 689.

⁵³Ibid., p. 186.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 254.

⁵⁵"Recruiting For The WAC Fails To Meet The Need," New York Times, 5 December 1943, sec. IV, p. 10.

⁵⁶"Information Pertaining to the Women's Army Corps," 10 May 1944, Modern Military Records Division, Army G-1 WAC Historical Background Info. File 1942-1949, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁷"Women: Stepsister Corps," Time, 10 May 1943, p. 55; "Women: The WAACs Arrive," Time, 22 March 1943, p. 50.

⁵⁸Treadwell, The Women's Army Corps, p. 408.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰U.S., Congress, House, 77th Congr., 2nd sess., 17 March 1942, Congressional Record 88:2591.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 2595.

⁶²Ibid., p. 2585.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 2582 and 2594.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 2600.

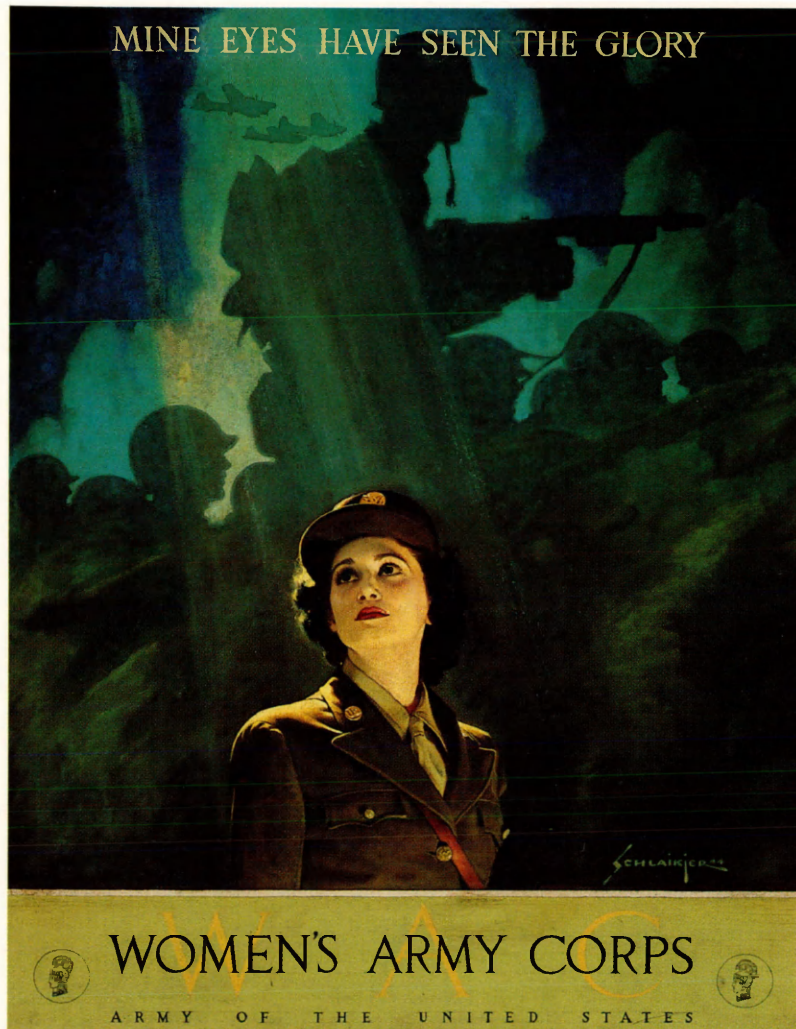
⁶⁵Ibid., p. 2593.

⁶⁶Chafe, The American Woman, pp. 245-246.

⁶⁷U.S., Congress, House, 77th Congr., 2nd sess., 17 March 1942, Congressional Record 88:2594.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 2601.

⁶⁹U.S., Department of Defense, Military Women in the Department of Defense, Vol. V (July 1987), pp. 3, 45; "Women, Blacks, Spouses Transforming the Military," New York Times, 25 August 1986, p. 1.



Original Painting by Jes Schlaikjer, 1944

In collection of Women's Army Corps Museum
Fort McClellan, Alabama

CHAPTER II

THE "UPFORWARDEST" WACS IN THE WORLD

The pioneering 6669th WAC Headquarters Platoon comprised fifty-seven auxiliaries and two officers when at full strength. Activated on June 3, 1943, the platoon was soon attached to Lt. Gen. Mark Clark's Fifth Army Headquarters in North Africa. Eighty-two Fifth Army Wacs (including replacements) performed vital communications and clerical work while following this Army across the Mediterranean and up the boot of Italy.¹

By the time the unit was deactivated on August 4, 1945, it had become the envy of the entire Women's Army Corps. While its members lived under fairly rugged conditions and worked long, wearisome hours, they also had the distinction of being the 'upforwardest' Wacs in the world. This made the Fifth Army Wacs minor celebrities--but these women had not joined the Corps to achieve fame.²

Like most Wacs, members of the 6669th enlisted primarily to do their patriotic duty. Genevieve (Mendenhall) Shoemaker feels

it cannot be easy [for people in the 1980's] to understand the climate of those times . . . most people believed the U.S.A. could do no wrong . . . I felt guilty and believed we had no right to life-as-usual while there was so much suffering in the world. The little volunteer work I had been able to do at home did not seem enough. To assuage the guilt I wanted a more active way to share the sacrifices and hardships. That is why I joined the WAAC.³

When Mendenhall joined in October, 1942, she had no way of knowing she would be chosen for overseas service. None of the women who would

eventually be the 6669th knew they were going abroad until May, 1943. And while their first reason for joining was usually to serve their country, most had secondary motives which ranged from the sublime to the superficial.

The sublime could be heartrending. In 1942, twenty-year-old Betty (Huyek) Hoefler Lembo lost her husband of six months in an airforce training accident. Too young to enlist, she waited for her twenty-first birthday and then joined the WAAC. She became an original member of the 6669th. Others joined for job training, to serve when other family members could not--or for the uniform.⁴

Dorothy (Dittwald) Haley laughingly explains that "it was the WAAC bill cap that impressed me so much, and, as foolish as it sounds, after viewing the WAAC recruiting poster I walked into the Federal Building in Dayton and signed up. This was the first week in February of 1943, and by the end of that month, I was in basic training in Daytona Beach, Florida."⁵

Training

The fifty-nine women assigned to the original 6669th joined the Corps in late 1942 or early 1943. At that time the Army was expecting the WAAC to grow into an organization 150,000 strong within a year. Accordingly, there were five WAAC Training Centers in operation:

<u>Designation</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Dates of Operation</u>
1st WAAC Training Center	Fort Des Moines, Iowa	July, 1942-February 1946
2nd WAAC Training Center	Daytona Beach, Florida	December, 1942-February, 1944
3rd WAAC Training Center	Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia	February, 1943-September, 1945
4th WAAC Training Center	Fort Devens, Massachusetts	March, 1943-August, 1943

<u>Designation</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Dates of Operation</u>
5th WAAC Training Center	Camp Monticello, Arkansas, Camps Polk and Ruston, Louisiana	April, 1943-June, 1943

Recruitment soon fell far short of the Army's hopes, and, as the table indicates, by early 1944 WAC training was limited to two locations.⁶

The women destined for the Fifth Army, however, joined at the height of Army expectations, and all five centers were involved in their training. They received basic training at Fort Des Moines, Daytona Beach, or Fort Oglethorpe. Basic was designed to transform a civilian woman into a "physically fit, psychologically well-adjusted, well-disciplined soldier who was informed of the duties, responsibilities and privileges of women in the Army."⁷

Course content consisted of noncombat classes nearly identical to the men's. WAC authorities felt this to be the quickest way to orient women to the Army and to give them a common background of experience. Thus, Wacs studied military customs, courtesies and drill, leadership, personal hygiene, mess management, current events, Army organization, physical fitness, and the wearing and care of uniforms and equipment. Their long days followed a typical schedule:

6 A.M. -- First Call
6:10 A.M. -- Reveille
6:15 A.M. -- Assembly
6:30 A.M. -- Mess
7:20 A.M. -- School and Drill Call
7:30 A.M. -- Assembly for classes and
drill until 11:45 A.M.
12:15 P.M. -- Mess
1 P.M. -- School and Drill Call
1:10 P.M. -- Assembly for classes and
drill until 4:15 P.M.
4:15 P.M. -- Recall
5 P.M. -- Retreat
5:15 P.M. -- Mess

6 P.M. - 9 P.M. — Study Periods
10:45 P.M. — Call to Quarters
11 P.M. — Taps

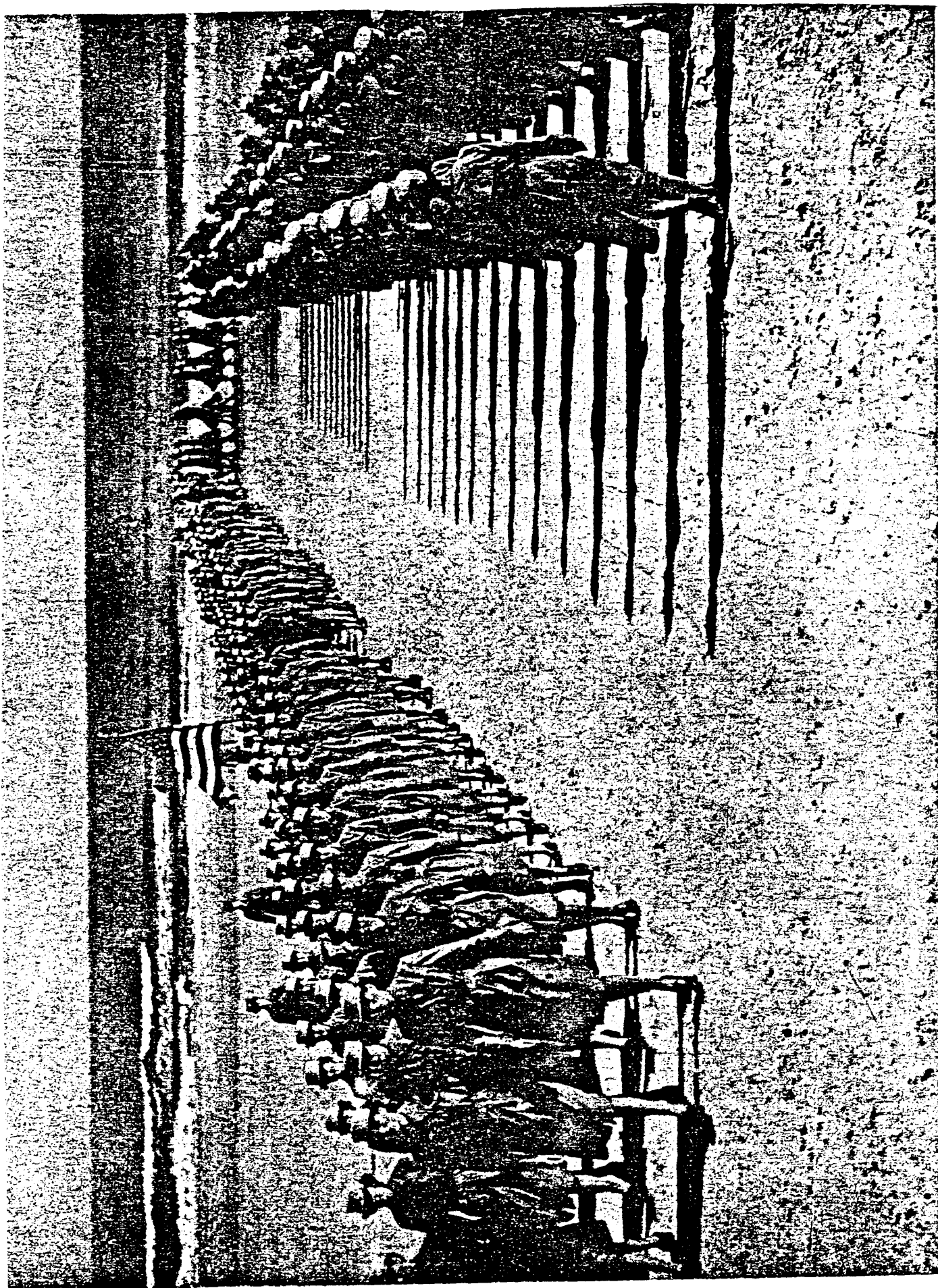
This schedule was followed six days a week, with Sunday a day of rest.⁸

Basic took from four to six weeks. Upon completion some exceptionally well-qualified Waacs were sent directly to field assignments or to Officers Candidate School; most, however, faced eight additional weeks of technical training in specialized skills such as motor vehicle operation, cooking, typing, or Army administration. It was usually during this technical training that a lucky few, like the women of the 6669th, were chosen for overseas service.⁹

Such women were selected with extreme care. WAC authorities knew they would be under great pressure. Not only would their work be demanding, but as a highly visible experiment they would be under close official and public scrutiny. Consequently, they were selected for their work experience, strength of character, firmness of discipline, maturity, and emotional stability.¹⁰

Overseas Waacs were initially selected by WAAC company commanders, and overseas units were formed, trained, and processed at WAAC training centers. Yet women so selected were only a few weeks removed from civilian life and had never been tested under field conditions. They had only a theoretical knowledge of military procedures and terminology. In July, 1943, the Army solved this problem by sending all Waacs to stateside posts for their first assignments. Women were then selected from these posts for overseas duty.

Soon after this innovation the WAAC was converted to the WAC, and the task of selecting women to go abroad fell to male commands and stations. According to Treadwell, it soon became apparent that "instead



ON THE SAND OF DAYTONA BEACH, a column of Waacs, proudly carrying an American flag, the girls' convertible raincoats are comfortable. When this picture was taken, these Waacs had been in training only one week and this was the first time they had ever passed in review.

Source: "Waacs and Waves," Life, 15 March 1943, p. 72.

of receiving personnel of excellent qualifications and no field experience, theaters were receiving women with plenty of experience and no qualifications."¹¹ Army investigators determined that male difficulty in choosing properly qualified women for overseas duty (and promotions in general) was due to an "honest tendency to consider a glamorous young woman, or a mannish loud-voiced one, the best material . . . whereas the women themselves had given highest ratings to women of mature judgment, and to those with a faculty for sweeping their share of the area."¹² The situation improved in 1944 when all Army commands were required to obtain their WAC company commander's approval for overseas selections and their WAC staff director's approval for officer selections.

The women who later constituted the original 6669th were chosen to go abroad by WAAC commanders under the initial selection system. They received their advanced technical training at Camp Polk, Louisiana. There they were placed in either the 161st or 162nd WAAC Headquarters Companies. By April, 1943, these units were slated for overseas service, and the women were very excited by the prospect of such duty. That was just as well, as their physical surroundings left much to be desired.¹³

The Fifth WAAC Training Center consisted of three prisoner-of-war enclosures at Camps Polk and Ruston in Louisiana and Camp Monticello in Arkansas. These camps were scattered one hundred miles apart from each other and were available only because the Army had not taken enough prisoners to fill them. The buildings had bare, rough interiors and were located in desolate, sandy stockades. Eunice (Onsrud) Hall remembers living in temporary barracks surrounded by barbed wire and

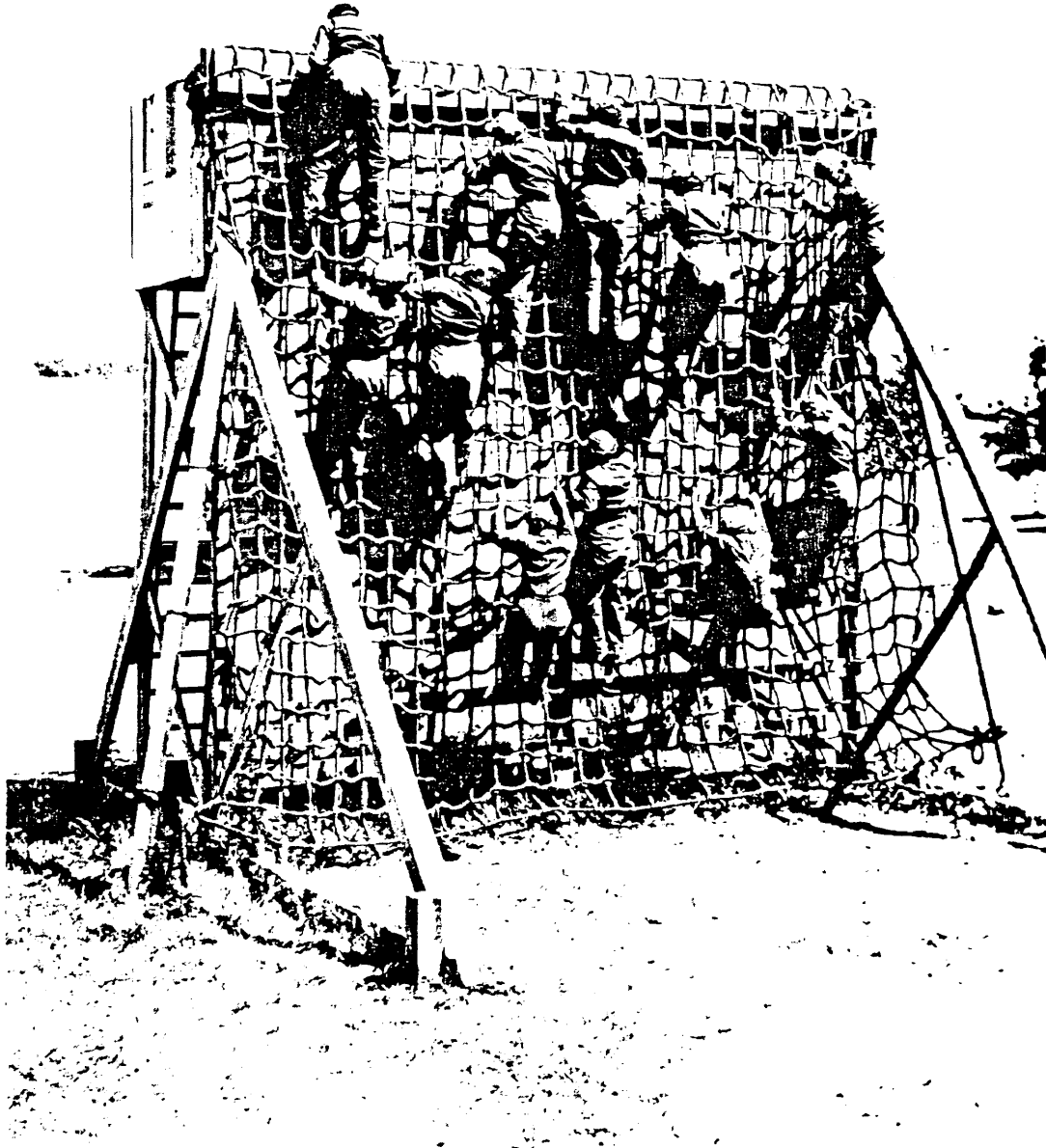
using latrines built for men only. Mertice White recalls thinking that Camp Polk was the hottest place she had ever been, and even the movie theaters in the nearest town were initially 'off-limits' until they could be cleared of rats and other vermin.¹⁴

Still, the women persevered and after completing their advanced training were transferred to Fort Devens, Massachusetts, on May 26, 1943. There they received extended field service (overseas) training. After Camp Polk this pleasant New England army post must have seemed like heaven. Several of the women, however, were in for a few anxious moments.¹⁵

Soon after arriving, fifty-nine women were pulled from the two Headquarters Companies and told to report to separate barracks. White recalls that most of them felt like "typical sad-sacks," convinced they had been rejected for overseas service. Actually, they were being honored, for these women were the original members of the 6669th WAC Headquarters Platoon (for complete list of platoon members, see Appendix A). From the date of its activation, June 3, 1943, this unit would receive priority treatment.¹⁶

Nevertheless, these women were still required to take several weeks of overseas training--training nearly identical to that given men. The Waacs were toughened by taking hikes, climbing cargo nets, and creeping through fields. They were gassed, dispersed, and taught to seek cover. They learned first aid, map reading, defense against chemical and air attack, malaria control, compass use, and how to mess in the field. This was done despite the fact that everyone acknowledged women would not be on the front lines and would be placed in what were basically office jobs. The Army's attitude seemed to be that if these women

wanted to be soldiers, they would be treated like soldiers, regardless of how illogical such treatment might be.¹⁷



OVERSEAS TRAINING. *Women practice going down a cargo net at Fort Des Moines.*

Source: Mattie E. Treadwell, The Women's Army Corps, (Washington, D.C.: Office of the chief of Military History, U.S. Department of the Army, 1954), p. 586.

This attitude reflected one approach to an age-old dilemma which faced military authorities when women were allowed into the army, and especially after the WAAC was converted to the WAC. Were women

'separate but equal' and therefore to receive specially tailored attention, or were they 'absolutely equal' and to be treated exactly like men? The Army fluctuated from one stand to the other. Sometimes Wacs were 'separate but equal,' as in the assigning of ranks, which were different for men and women. At other times, they were 'absolutely equal,' as in the case of overseas training. Still, this training did not harm the women, even if quite a bit of it was useless. What did harm them was what they were not taught.

The social environment women encountered overseas was different from anything they had ever experienced. According to Army psychiatrists (after the fact), they should have been formally prepared for the exaggerated popularity they would have, the overemphasis on social life, quick friendships, overdependency on other women, lack of privacy, lack of customary conventions, excessive drinking, and the psychological effect of danger and restrictions. Of course, men encountered some of these same problems, but they were participating in activities sanctioned by society. Women overseas were often seen as having overstepped the limits of propriety. All their problems tended to be intensified by this fact.¹⁸

The biggest problem facing the women of the 6669th during the summer of '43, however, was guessing when they would be shipped out. After all, there was a war on, and transportation and supply jams truly did affect women and men equally! They finally set off for their embarkation point, Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, on July 18.¹⁹

The 6669th spent ten days in Virginia, and they probably seemed like twenty, for staging areas are not known for their peaceful atmospheres. Troops were under heavy security restrictions, unable to call out

without special permission, closely watched by military police, and usually suffering from "gangplankitis"--the fear of boarding a ship that might be attacked. A contemporary magazine writer characterized staging areas as the perfect example of the Army slogan 'Hurry up and wait.'²⁰

Onsrud remembers passing the time doing KP, and White and Eleanor (Spinola) Lange remember mosquitos and heat--and more heat. In fact, White realized her earlier judgment of Camp Polk as the hottest place she had ever been, had been premature and now decided that "there couldn't be a hotter, stickier, more uncomfortable place this side of Hades" than Camp Patrick Henry.²¹

It was made even more uncomfortable by the inoculations given all troops going abroad, shots which often made the recipients ill.



PROCESSING FOR OVERSEAS. Members of the first WAAC unit to go overseas receive their immunization shots, above, and are inspected by the WAAC director, below.

Source: Treadwell, The Women's Army Corps p. 106

Mendenhall notes the women were "especially careful not to faint after having our shots. A lot of men did faint, and there was a crowd outside

. the clinic when we came out after having ours. We walked by them as blithely as possible and did not react to the shots until we were in our barracks.²²

The waiting finally ended on July 28, when the platoon was given the order to 'fall-in.' Fully loaded with backpacks, the women marched one mile in a drenching downpour and up the gangplank of the S.S. Empress of Scotland for the nine-day trip to Africa.²³

The Way to Mostaganem

The Empress set sail on the 29th under air and sea escort for what turned out to be an uneventful trip. The 6669th occupied officers' quarters, ten women to a stateroom, and ate in the officers' dining room. The weather was beautiful, although it turned cool and rainy the last couple of days, and most of the women thoroughly enjoyed the trip--with the exception of a few who suffered from seasickness.²⁴

The African shoreline came into view on August 6. Onsrud recalls:

It was dusk the last day when we finally saw land and you can imagine the rejoicing. As we came closer, a large city of stone buildings lay before us [Casablanca]. Soon after we had to prepare ourselves for debarkation, and what a sensation it was to walk down the gangplank and set foot on foreign soil. Cheers of welcome from the boys rang from all sides for "American girls are here." We boarded trucks which took us three miles to camp where we found our temporary homes, which were nothing more but tents.²⁵

The women arrived at camp well after dark, fished their flashlights out of their barracks bags, and set out for the latrines--which turned out to be a good half mile away. Then they finally settled in for the night with five Wacs to a tent, each woman on a folding canvas army cot.²⁶

They awoke the next morning to the exotic sight of Arabs riding their camels and burrows to market day in Casablanca. The platoon spent

three days at Camp Don B. Passage, a staging area erected in the dusty white fields outside of the city. Perhaps it was there that the women began to realize just how far away from home they really were.²⁷

From then on even the most familiar routines of everyday life--eating, personal hygiene, dressing, housing--would take on a new and different character. At Camp Don B. Passage, White was first introduced to a staple of Army diet: K-rations and C-rations. These were dehydrated and canned emergency foods developed during World War II. Modern science presented not-always-appreciative soldiers with such delicacies as powdered eggs and coffee, hash in soup or pancake form, spam, and canned butter preserved with paraffin. Actually, this last item may have been a blessing in disguise, for as White recalled, after one spoonful your mouth was completely coated with wax and you were unable to taste anything else.²⁸

Despite universal complaints about Army cuisine, Wacs did eat the food, and many of them actually gained weight. As time went on the food improved tremendously, with Wacs sending home reports of steak, turkey, pork chops, real eggs, and fresh vegetables. Yet certain items remained "special treats" throughout the war. Forty years later women still recall the Air Corps flying in ice-cream and fresh milk for special occasions. And throughout the war urgent requests crossed the Atlantic for parents to mail back chocolate and nuts, crackers and salami.²⁹

It was also at Camp Don B. Passage that the women of the 6669th discovered the versatility of the World War II army helmet. An essential piece of wearing apparel, it served double duty as a sink and laundry basin. In the fall of 1943 Elizabeth (Hennessy) Blazek wrote: "Those helmets are really the thing. You can take a bath and do the

family laundry in them, and they work just fine. They hold quite a bit of water and you hang the strap over the faucet handle and all you have to do is to tip the helmet, out comes the hot water, and then just turn the handle, and it fills up again."³⁰ Lavatory and laundry facilities were one area where the Wacs definitely 'roughed-it,' at least in comparison to those on the home front, if not to the men on the front lines.³¹

Running water was not always available, and when it was, it was often cold. When in the field, one set of showers was usually used by men and women on alternating schedules. Yet this was not a guarantee of cleanliness, for pipelines could break--and when garrisoned in a city, the women never knew when the municipality might turn the water (and electricity) off for hours at a time. As the Wacs soon learned, adaptability was the key for surviving such minor crises.³²

It was also the key to surviving the uniform situation. Wacs often wore uniforms that were either the wrong size or improperly designed in the first place. White recalls she was initially issued size forty coveralls (she was not that large a woman), and Margaret (Stringfellow) Malley had to wear the wrong size shoes for months before she finally received a pair that fit--and those came from home, not the Army. Of course, such difficulties were part and parcel of Army bureaucracy and to be expected. But reasonable suggestions for solving them were often met with unreasonable objections.³³

It must be remembered that the military was in the midst of a massive mobilization effort, and occasional supply problems were inevitable. Such problems were particularly understandable when dealing with a small unit like the Fifth Army Wacs. In their case a supply

shipment often consisted of one small, easily misplaced box. In the overall army supply system one lost box was inconsequential, even if it was a major misfortune for the unit involved.³⁴

When supplies were lost, or approved uniforms just were not appropriate for their needs, the Fifth Army Wacs simply bent the rules. They were usually stationed in the field, and men's fatigues (wool shirts, trousers, and combat boots) became their standard outfit. Of course, this was not the regulation WAC uniform. That uniform mimicked Army style in color and detail. In winter officers wore olive-drab belted jackets and 'Army pink' flared skirts, and the winter jacket and skirts of WAC auxiliaries were both olive drab. In summer all ranks wore outfits of khaki colored gabardine and twill. The WAC cap (the one that had so impressed Dittwald) had a stiff pill-box crown and jockey



Source: "Wacks, War Bonnets," Newsweek, 1 June 1942, p. 31.

visor, and for summer there was a soft hat with an all-around brim. The Army also supplied women with shirtwaists and khaki ties, a brown handbag, brown oxfords, various coats, pieces of underwear, and work clothing.³⁵

While Treadwell judges this to have been a basically sound outfit, by early 1942 the question of a WAAC uniform had already "assumed a difficulty out of all proportion to its importance."³⁶ It soon became apparent that the uniform was neither comfortably utilitarian nor aesthetically pleasing. The fabric was too heavy, the cut was unbecoming, and the wrong quantities of various sizes were produced. General reaction to the outfit was so bad that some ninety percent of the unsolicited letters of advice received by the WAAC placed the responsibility for WAAC recruiting problems on the uniform.³⁷

WAC authorities eventually blamed the Quartermaster General's Office for the Corps' uniform problems. Difficulties occurred when that agency insisted that women's clothing requirements be dealt with on an equal basis with men's. That meant, for example, that women's clothes were sized just like men's--long, regular, and short--even though women's physiques demanded a greater variety such as half-sizes and misses sizes. It also meant that as men were issued only two pairs of shoes, women were also issued two. Yet men were given identical pairs: if one pair needed repair, they could wear the other. Women were given work boots and dress shoes which were not interchangeable. If one pair needed repair women were technically without footwear. Moreover, WAAC clothing contracts were awarded to menswear manufacturers because producers of women's wear could not turn out women's uniforms for the same price as men's. This decision resulted in problems such as jackets

with the buttons so low that Wacs could not sit down without unbuttoning them; the manufacturers had forgotten that women's hips were wider than men's.³⁸

Some of these problems were corrected--for instance, women were eventually issued three pairs of shoes--but many were not. Although a uniform with higher buttons and other improvements was eventually designed, the Quartermaster General decided not to distribute it until the supply of original uniforms ran out. As those first outfits were produced when the Army expected hundreds of thousands of women to enlist, they were never all issued. Women in the field simply had to do the best they could with what they had, as the 6669th did in its combat boots and men's trousers.³⁹

The 6669th also made do with its living quarters, which included everything from an Italian palace to tents like those in Casablanca. The Army housed overseas Wacs in what was available. In addition to tents and palaces, housing included barracks, Niesen huts, chateaux, monasteries, girls' schools, and hotels. The Army also had to decide how much security to provide women overseas. Such provisions varied tremendously from command to command.⁴⁰

In some cases, precautions were so extensive that they caused some to wonder whether special housing or security measures outweighed the usefulness of Wacs abroad. For example, Wacs in New Guinea were "locked within their barbed-wire compound at all times except when escorted by armed guards to work or to approved group recreation. No leaves or passes, or one-couple dates, were allowed at any time."⁴¹ Whether such measures were necessary was itself a question whose answer Army authorities never did agree upon. In contrast to the New Guinea Wacs,

the Fifth Army Wacs were protected only by the camp's regular guard. Of course, the 6669th operated in a part of the world far removed from the wilds of the East Indies.⁴²

The platoon got its first good look at the North African landscape during a three-day train ride from Casablanca to Mostaganem, Algeria, August 9-11, 1943. Their mode of transportation was unlike anything they had ever experienced before and their first trip on foreign soil one they would never forget. The troop train consisted of two coaches and ten to twelve boxcars of the type called '40's & 8's,' as they had been designed during World War I to hold forty men and eight horses. This time two of them held thirty women each, every one of them with a week's supply of food, two barracks bags, a musette bag, gas mask, helmet, and bedroll. They were so crowded that several had to sit with their feet out the door and they slept in shifts. They never did figure



"40 men, 8 horses (lengthwise)" is the familiar inscription on boxcar.

Source: Daisy (Jessup) Schafer, Scrapbook, private collection
Puyallup, Washington.

out how anyone could ever have packed ten more people and eight horses into one of those cars!⁴³

The train travelled through beautiful mountain regions high above green fertile valleys, and at every stop Arabs surrounded the cars selling fruits and vegetables and begging for candy and gum. Yet the novelty of the trip did not outweigh its discomfort. The women were crowded, could not change their clothes, ate C-rations and drank warm canteen water, and were covered with soot. The only stops were at public toilets--dirty marble buildings with holes in the floor. After three days and two nights of this, Norma Reick, for one, was beginning to wonder why she had ever joined the WAAC.⁴⁴

On August 11 the train finally pulled into Oran, Algeria, where seven-foot-tall black Senegalese soldiers--the very men that had Representative Vincent so concerned for the women's safety--helped the Wacs shift their baggage to army trucks for the fifty-mile trip to Mostaganem. The women lived in that city for three months, assigned to the Fifth Army and attached to Special Troops Fifth Army for Administration.⁴⁵

A Job To Do

Tired, hungry, and dirty, the Fifth Army Wacs finally arrived at their new home, a huge stone building formerly used as a rug-making school. It was a two-story affair with a long balcony along the top floor and a huge courtyard below. The rooms were large with high ceilings and tiled walls, and the women slept ten to a room, each on an army cot, and lived out of their barracks bags. The mess hall was in the same building, and there was even a recreation hall where they spent

their free time in games, writing letters, and entertaining.⁴⁶

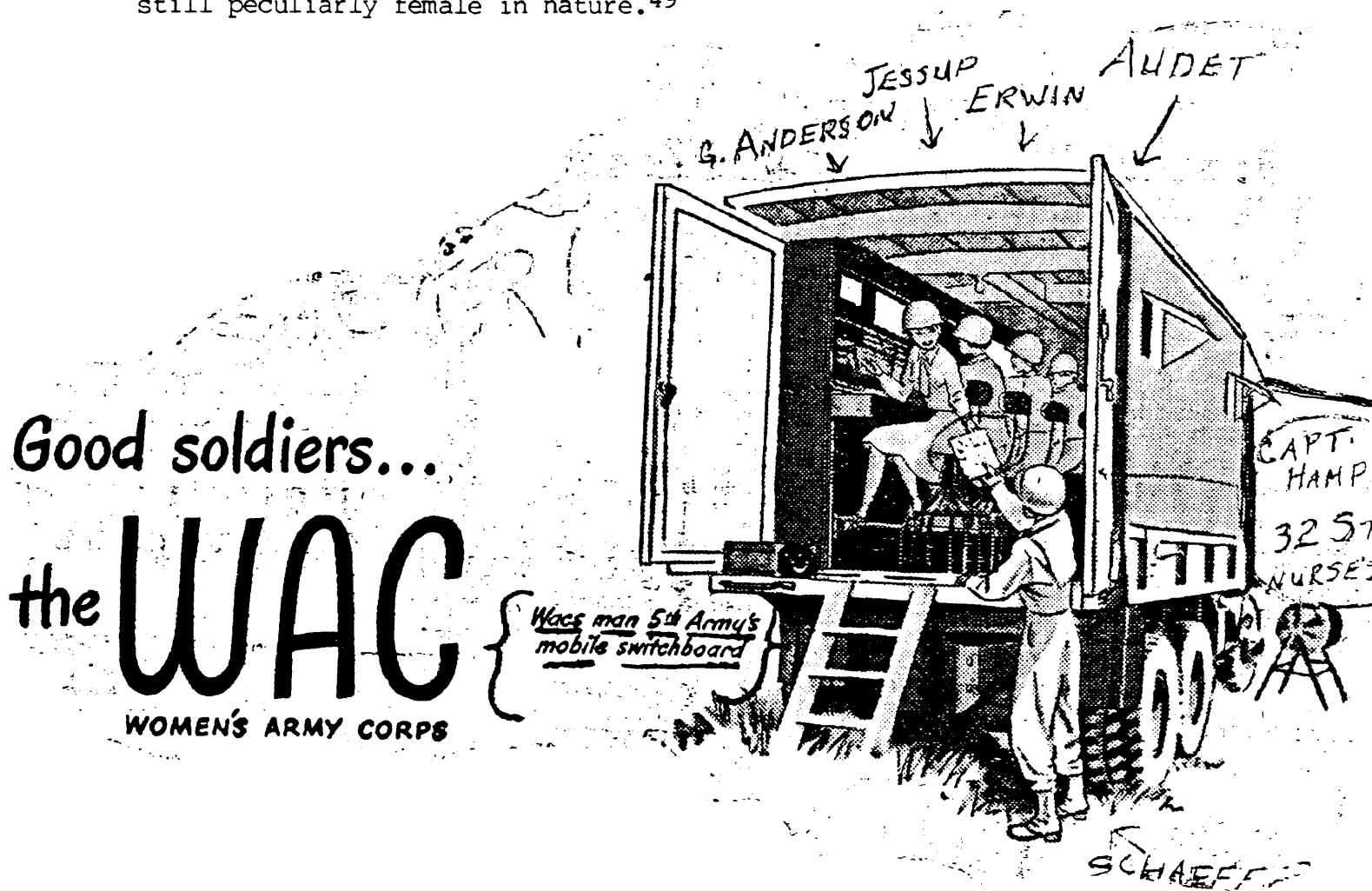
That first night, however, the women were more interested in the showers (even if they were cold), food (even if it was still C-rations), and sleep (even the cots felt good after the boxcar floor). The next morning they awoke refreshed and discovered they had a beautiful view of the Mediterranean and one day to settle in before they had to report for work. Even Reick decided that enlisting in the Corps had been a good idea after all.⁴⁷

On August 13 the Fifth Army women started the jobs they had enlisted to do. The 6669th table of organization called for ten telephone operators, seven clerks, sixteen clerk-typists, ten stenographers, six teletype operators, and one administrative clerk. The remaining personnel were in the platoon headquarters and included a platoon sergeant, a company clerk, a mess sergeant, two cooks, a cook's helper, a utility repairwoman, and two WAC officers.⁴⁸

These women worked in traditionally female occupations where their superior efficiency was a foregone conclusion. Such employment was typical for overseas Wacs. They were selected, trained, and housed abroad so they could release men for combat duty, and the Army hoped they would do their jobs better than the men had. While hope for superior efficiency was also a consideration in the United States, it was even more important overseas where the shortage of shipping space meant each Wac sent delayed the arrival of a man.

When Wacs first went abroad they were placed in four types of jobs: clerical, communications, motor transport, and cooking. By 1944 they also did technical and professional work, radio and electrical work, and mechanical and trade jobs. Even so, the vast majority of Wacs performed

clerical and communications duties. Thus, while the WAC experience moved women into war situations formerly designated 'male only,' it was still peculiarly female in nature.⁴⁹



Source: Daisy (Jessup) Schafer, Scrapbook, private collection

Puyallup, Washington.

It could also be singularly exciting. In the 6669th being a telephone operator could mean working with the French Liason Detachment and translating messages from the allies; a clerk or stenographer might track troop advances on a headquarters' map and provide a daily bulletin or world news, or work for General Clark himself; a typist might type up the attack plans for Fifth Army advances. Others distributed and edited

incoming cables, monitored reports from front-line observers, wrote citations and organized awards ceremonies, and booked and prepared for USO shows.⁵⁰

Some of these jobs could become tedious, and slow times caused boredom. Even when things were busy, being so close to the front intensified the pressure for these women to do all jobs at peak efficiency. Yet being overseas and near combat highlighted both to the women themselves, and to the men with whom they worked, the important contribution the Wacs were making to the war effort.

The Army was not alone in benefiting from the Wacs' presence; the Wacs themselves gained by their overseas experiences. For one thing, the women were exposed to different cultures and ways of life. In October, 1943, White wrote home about how cold it had gotten in Mostaganem and admitted that the cold seemed strange because she

had pictured Africa as a land of deserts and jungles with vicious animals and native black people running around practically naked but nothing could be further from the truth. The French people are very much civilized even to the latest fashions and if it weren't for the presence of the Arabs (who incidently are not all black—in fact a few aren't much darker than a white person with a 'tan') and the terrific odors which seem to be a part of Africa . . . you could almost imagine you were back in the States . . ."⁵¹

Mendenhall became fascinated with the contrast between French and Arab culture and developed a life-long interest in sociology and international affairs in general, and poverty in particular. This interest bore fruit in 1974 when she received a Master's Degree in Social Work.⁵²

Curiosity was only one of many emotions aroused by that highly-charged wartime atmosphere. Patriotism was a constant companion to the

Fifth Army women. The depth of their feelings was revealed on September 1, 1943, when the entire platoon reenlisted in the U.S. Army as members of the Women's Army Corps after being discharged from the Auxiliary corps the day before. This 100 percent reenlistment rate was not unique, but was notable when contrasted to the 75 percent rate worldwide. The new 6669th WAC Headquarters Platoon was sworn-in at a public ceremony attended by Lieutenant General Clark himself.⁵³

One hundred percent reenlistment was not an indication that the platoon was 100 percent contented with its lot. Lucy (Amber) Wright and Dittwald were homesick to the point of tears as they sat in Oran's USO Club and listened to "White Christmas" on the radio--even if it was only November. And Spinola soon had to face up to conflicting emotions that must be one of the greatest common denominators of those who serve their country in a combat zone: fear mixed with a sense of duty.⁵⁴

In early September Fifth Army Headquarters had moved out for the Italian invasion and left the 6669th in Mostaganem as part of the Headquarters Rear Link. On November 11, unaware that the platoon was soon to ship-out and rejoin the Army in embattled Italy, Spinola had her

first real glimpse of war. That afternoon while in the park, we had seen this immense convoy just off Mostaganem. About 7 p.m. it was attacked by planes. We saw two ships go up, thinking all the while of the boys out there, and it was like the Fourth of July . . . the following day we found out that we were to leave Mostaganem . . . I did not sleep well that night, I guess I was scared of the trip coming up after seeing those ships attacked by the planes and being sunk. I couldn't help but wonder what had happened to all those people.⁵⁵

Spinola's sense of duty did win out over her sense of fear, and on November 13 she was with the rest of the platoon as it boarded trucks for the long, cold ride to Mers el Kabir on the Mediterranean coast.

There the naval transport U.S.S. James O'Hara awaited them.⁵⁶

The three-day trip to Naples turned out to be a quiet one, during which the women enjoyed some of the amenities of Navy life. They luxuriated in bunks with real mattresses, took hot showers, and were serenaded by piped-in music while eating in the officers' dining room. Yet even then the women wore their life belts, and the James O'Hara hugged the African coast for as long as possible. The sense of danger never disappeared and was in fact heightened by the ship's approach to the Italian mainland.⁵⁷

The First Wacs in a War-Torn Europe

In North Africa the Wacs had been somewhat sheltered from the harsh realities of war. With the exception of the November 11 bombing raid, they had not witnessed enemy action, and the front lines had passed far beyond Mostaganem months before the 6669th arrived. Italy would be different. As Spinola recorded, this was apparent from the very beginning:

Wednesday morning, the 17th of November, we saw the coastline of Italy for the first time. The weather was awful, cold, damp, raining, foggy and every other miserable adjective you could think of. We sailed past the Isle of Capri, through what the boys call "Torpedo Junction." The Isle is a beautiful place, that is, what we could see of it. What struck me most was the beauty of the cliffs, rising directly out of the sea and the villas along the way, some that looked like old medieval castles. Right into the harbor of Naples. There we docked. Again here was the horror of war and the total havoc caused by bombs, etc. Ships of every size and kind, in every conceivable condition, some lying on their sides, some with bottoms up, others sunk directly with nothing but mastheads, etc. sticking up out of the water. I thought this must have been what Pearl Harbor looked like. Warehouses were a shambles of twisted steel and wreckage, others like skeletons minus windows and roofs. It was all so grim and such a terrible example of the wages of war.⁵⁸

The James O'Hara was unable to pull all the way into the harbor, so the troops were put ashore in invasion barges. All troops, including the Wacs, were loaded down with field packs, gas masks, canteens, utility bags, bedrolls, and other gear.⁵⁹

Thus attired, the women of the 6669th touched the Italian mainland and thereby became the first Wacs (and with the exception of the nurses at Salerno, the first American women) to set foot in a war-torn Europe. Their arrival made them minor celebrities; however, at the time Spinola did not feel particularly newsworthy:

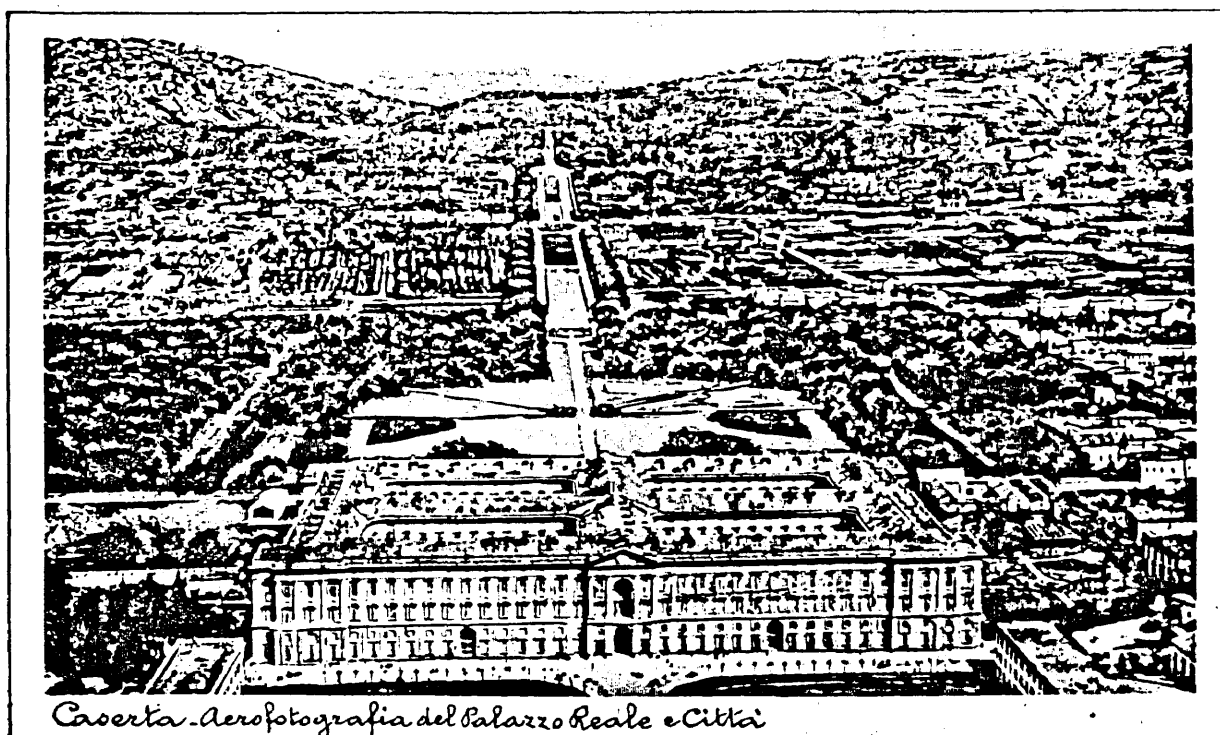
My feet were soaked, standing around in the rainwater and mud. Then into our trucks where we waited for another two hours, it seemed. Wave after wave of boys came off those troop ships, our boys going off to do battle with the enemy. Some of them going into battle for the first time, but most of them veterans from other invasions. All of them singing with what appeared to be high spirits. They laughed, joked and flirted with us, handing out the same time-worn "Gee, it's good to see someone from home; what are you doing here; how long have you been here; where are you from; when are we going to see you again?" Question after question. We finally moved off . . . Along the way we saw bivouacs of American and English soldiers, sleeping in pup-tents on the cold, wet ground, mud a foot thick and I wondered how they could be like that and still be as cheerful as they were. And then felt bad for feeling as I did when I was so much better off than they were.

Our stopping off place came at long last. In the dark it looked like something only an insane person could have built.⁶⁰

The building in question was the 100-room Palazzo Realio, built in 1752 by order of a presumably sane King of Naples. Located in the town of Caserta, it would be home and workplace to the Fifth Army Wacs for the next several months.⁶¹

According to White, there were many noteworthy things about the palace, and there were many days that she never went off the grounds. The landscaping included a canal, beautiful gardens, and shaded walks.

Some of the rooms were papered with silk, and some of the paintings, frescoes, and statues were "beyond description." Still, the greatest



Source; Daisy (Jessup) Schafer, Scrapbook, private collection

Puyallup, Washington

impression this king's palace left on the Wacs was one of inconvenience and discomfort. Apparently there was no heating system, and everyone suffered from the damp cold. Also, the building was huge. The Wacs initially lived near the top floor, ate in the basement, and worked somewhere in between. The floor plan was a labyrinth, and certain areas had been bombed and were closed-off. Consequently, it was quite a challenge just to negotiate the stairs and corridors without getting lost.⁶²

Once they found their offices, the women performed the same jobs in Caserta as in Mostaganem. But also as in Mostaganem, the Wacs had time

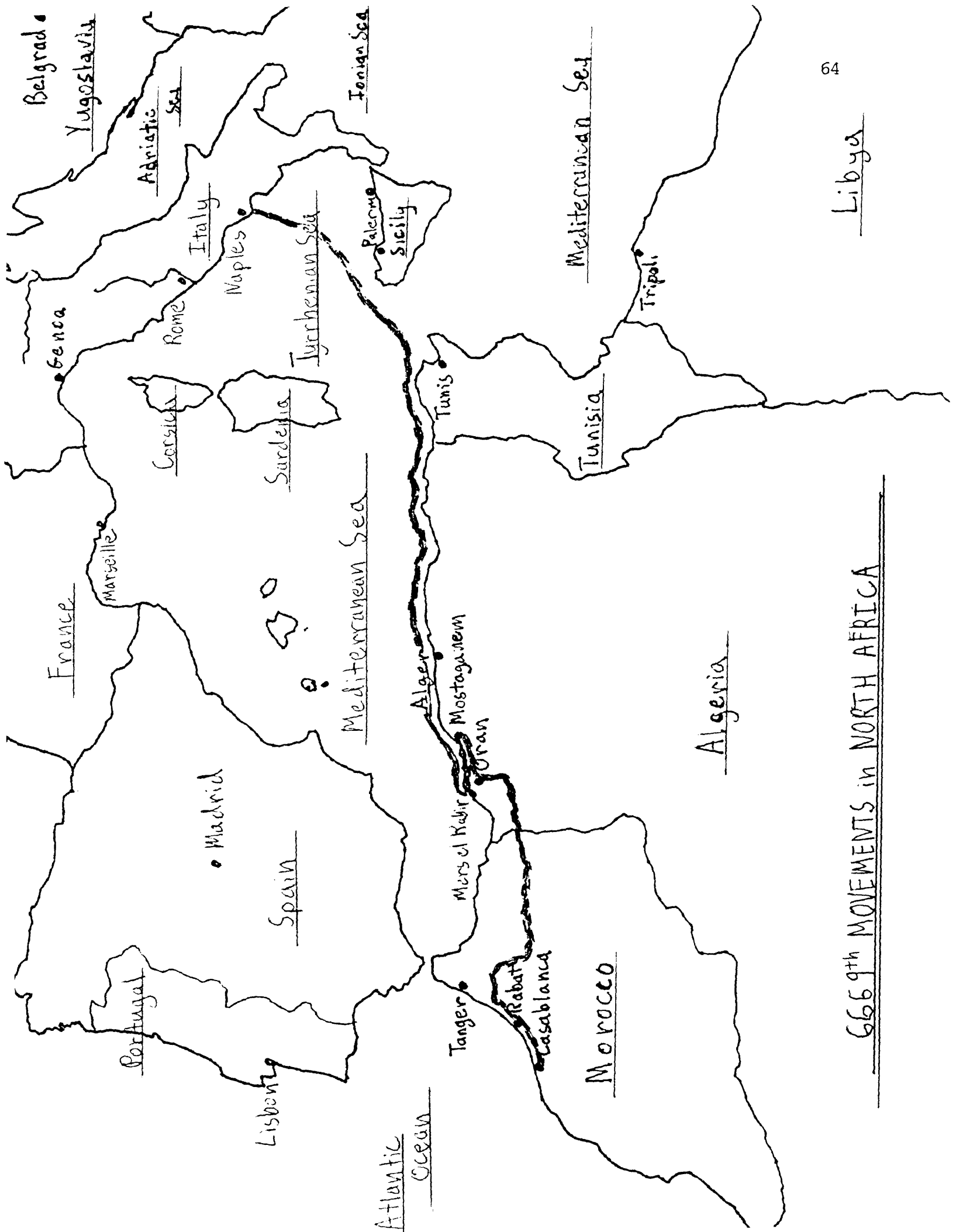
for recreation. While in Italy the women had repeated chances to attend dances, parties, the theater, concerts, USO shows, rest camps, and, of course, to go sightseeing. Pompeii, Rome, Florence, Pisa, and Venice were all visited by one or more members of the 6669th.⁶³

Holidays were the perfect excuse for fun and relaxation, and the troops tried to make things as much like home as possible. Christmas 1943 found the 6669th still in Caserta, and the celebration started with a party at the American Red Cross. This was followed by Protestant and Catholic religious services (the later was broadcast to the States), and the evening concluded with a round of Christmas caroling. A week later the Wacs ushered in the New Year at a party given for them by the enlisted men of Fifth Army Headquarters.⁶⁴

Following the Troops

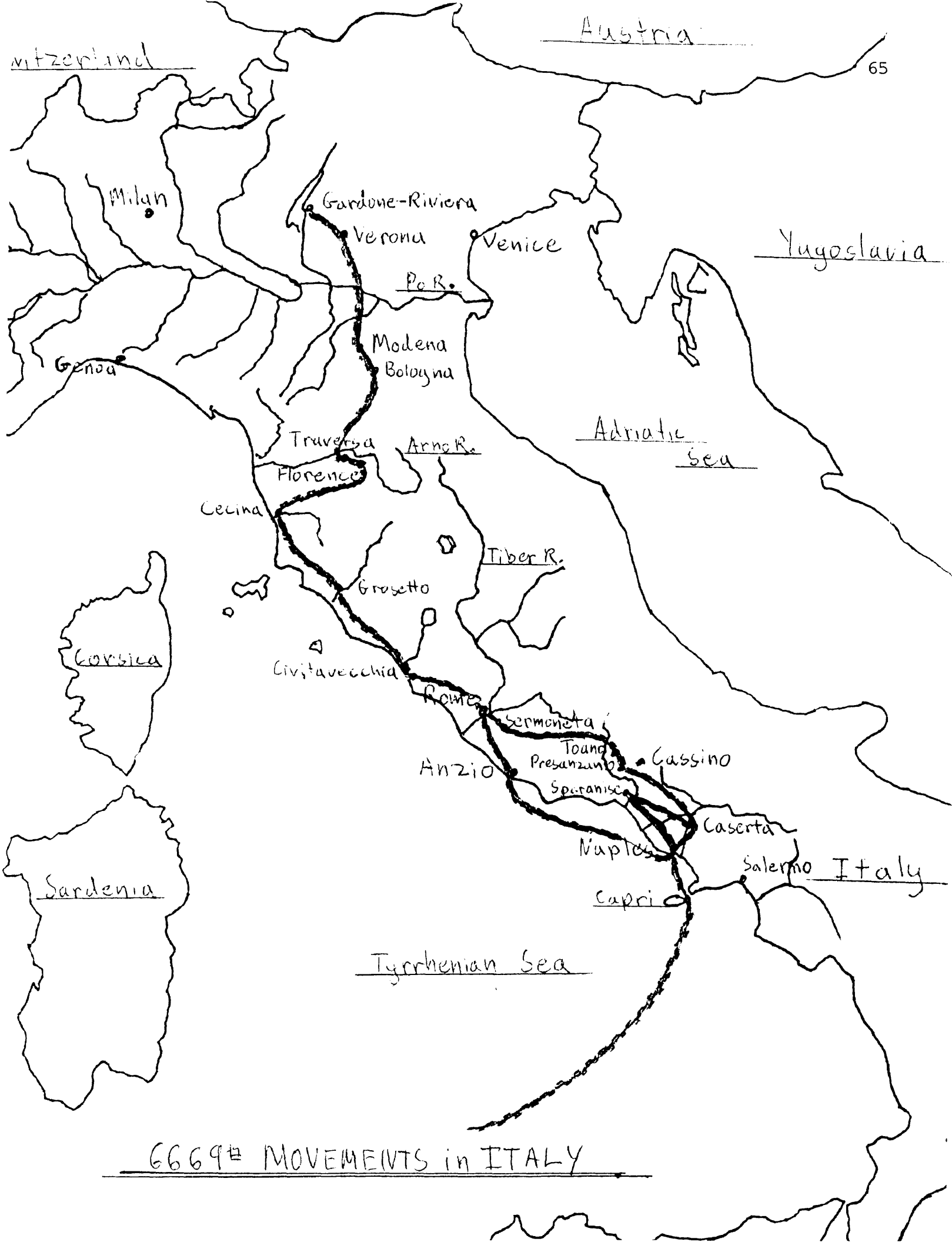
In January, 1944, the platoon, along with the Fifth Army, began a year-and-a-half march up the Italian peninsula (see maps pages 64 and 65). It made this march in two sections, designated simply as the Forward and Rear Echelons. The Forward Echelon consisted of twenty-three women attached to the Forward Command Post of the Fifth Army Headquarters. The Rear Echelon served with the main Headquarters unit. The 6669th split on January 28, and thereafter the echelons leap-frogged each other up the spine of Italy, occasionally being stationed at the same place. For the rest of the war some of their stays were as short as a week, and they were located anywhere from twelve to thirty-five miles behind the front.⁶⁵

The Forward Echelon first moved to near Presanzano, where they were billeted in pyramidal tents pitched in an area of their own, complete



666^{9th} MOVEMENTS IN NORTH AFRICA

Libya



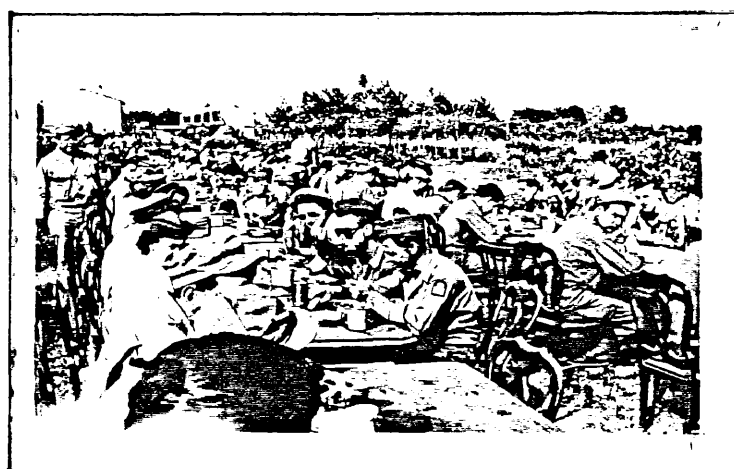
with orderly and day rooms. On March 22 they moved on to Toano, and on the 23rd the Rear Echelon moved to Sparanise. By the end of the month, the whole platoon was living in tents and thriving on it. Outdoor life was so agreeable that by August, 1944, Maj. Margaret Janeway of the Medical Corps determined that the Fifth Army Wacs were the healthiest women in the entire Mediterranean Theater.⁶⁶

Tent-life was indeed preferable to the cold, drafty, and sometimes unsafe buildings where Wacs might otherwise be quartered. And with a little bit of ingenuity tents could be quite comfortable as an early 1944 newspaper article indicates:

Beside each bed were wooden tables balancing mirrors and the usual feminine beauty paraphernalia. Uniforms hung from improvised hangers. Freshly laundered stockings dangled down from the tent flaps. Before each tent was a neat row of slit trenches, just in case. "No, we didn't rig those ourselves, but we haul our own wood," said Corporal Garret, rather known as "Big Nellie" to one and all. "Have you ever lived in a palace?" she demanded with a note of horror in her voice. "We did and its awful," added Corporal Irwin, a pretty gray-haired woman whose husband Pvt. Robert Irwin is stationed with the Air Corps in England. "Tent life is much more comfortable" they agreed.⁶⁷

In an April, 1944, letter home, White describes how she and her four tent-mates planted a victory garden of radishes, onions, and lettuce in front of their tent. Italian workers laid white gravel throughout the camp, and even planted some beautiful purple Irises in front of the latrines--although White figured "the boys" had put them up to that.⁶⁸

Frequent moves meant such measures were not always possible--and there were drawbacks to tent-life. For one thing, the women lived very close to nature. Mosquito nets, insect repellent, and atabrine tablets were standard issue. Margaret (Byram) Russo wrote home about "quite a few bugs and spiders that are strange looking" and about mice that



Source: Eunice (Onsrud) Hall
private collection
Baltimore, Maryland

chewed "through cracker and cookie boxes, dirty handkerchiefs, almost everything but beer and pretzels."⁶⁹ Onsrud put on her shoes one morning to find a six-inch green snake taking up residence in one of them--so she "just dumped him out and away he went."⁷⁰ Yet despite such visits, nature was generally pleasant. Byram eulogized the platoon's tent-life:

The bright crescent moon, evening drone of a fighter, taps coming through the woods into the clearing, dull sky fireflies intermittently lighting the darkness like a neon, the distant music of the outdoor movie and familiar sounds of the girls around their tents, doing the last bit of work for the day.⁷¹

The women thrived on tent-life and continued to excel at their work. The platoon's February, 1944, performance was of such high caliber that it earned the platoon the Fifth Army Plaque with Clasp,



Source: Daisy (Jessup) Shafer, Scrap-book, private collection, Puyallup, Washington.

awarded each month to an outstanding unit. It was presented to the women on April 27 by Lieutenant General Clark. He notes in his memoirs that the women of the 6669th had "more than lived up to the job that had been given them. They were efficient and hardworking, and ready to face whatever dangers or hardships came their way . . . I always felt that the mere presence of the WAC's bucked up the Fifth Army's morale."⁷² The Plaque and Clasp were only one of several honors the platoon received. Individual women earned certificates of merit and commendations, and in June, 1945, the group would receive the Meritorious Service Unit Plaque, thereby becoming one of the few units to receive both Army Plaques.⁷³

The 6669th became an integral part of Fifth Army Headquarters, and the WAC Staff Director for the Mediterranean Theater of Operations (MTO) called them "Fifth Army first and Wacs second."⁷⁴ The women wore the Fifth Army's green scarf and blue and red shoulder patch with pride, and this sense of unity both contributed to, and resulted from, the unit's sterling performance. As the Deputy Chief of Staff of the North African Theater of Operations (NATOUSA) put it in December, 1943, "From the moment of their assignment . . . our Wacs made a very good impression, not only as knowing how to do their jobs properly but also as being 'good soldiers'. That initial impression is now a deserved reputation and is a tribute to the WAC training and management."⁷⁵

WAC commanders credited much of this success to the personal policies of General Clark and other high-ranking officers whose actions left no doubt that the Wacs were considered useful and valuable members of the Army. Years later Treadwell concluded that the esprit de corps so characteristic of the 6669th was a direct result of the women's

conviction that they were needed and wanted.⁷⁶



LOOKING FOR ACTION—Looking every inch a soldier, lanky Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark, commander of the U. S. Fifth Army, was caught in this unusual character study as he peered ahead from his seat on PT boat carrying him to beachhead near Anzio, Italy. (U. S. Signal Corps Photo From NEA.)

Source: Daisy (Jessup) Schafer, Scrapbook, private collection Puyallup, Washington.

The women were indeed fond of General Clark, and never more so than in May of 1944, when he arranged for several of them to take a week's rest and recreation on the Isle of Capri. White remembers her week as "the one and only time we were allowed complete freedom as to where we went, what we did, how we dressed, or what time we came or went." It was "a little bit of paradise in a part of the world that has been ravaged by war, but the war hasn't even touched it."⁷⁷

Unfortunately, the good relations evident between Wacs and the highest ranking officers did not always trickle down to the enlisted men, or even to all the officers. As the vast majority of Fifth Army Wacs were enlisted personnel, some of these bad feelings arose from the perennial conflict between the officer and his subordinate, rather than

from antipathy between men as men and women as women. A sampling of WAC letters supports this contention.

Soon after arriving in Caserta, Spinola was one of several Wacs assigned to quarters recently vacated by Army officers. The rooms were filthy, and she wrote, "I'm afraid I've lost some respect for them, and at times have even found it difficult to salute them. I try to avoid confronting one or any of them as often as I can. I wonder why they are called '90-day-wonders.' Perhaps because they were ever commissioned. Certainly not that they are 'wonderful,'"⁷⁸ Letters written in early 1945 by White and Byram sustain this view. White complained that most officers "don't believe in giving enlisted personnel a break . . . ," and Byram similarly charged that enlisted personnel's importance was placed "at the bottom of the list."⁷⁹

Some of this antipathy may have existed because the Fifth Army Wacs were indeed at the bottom of the promotion list. According to Treadwell, WAC grades and ratings were generally good in the MTO but were almost totally absent in Fifth Army Headquarters. Apparently, she was right. She also believes however, that lack of promotions had little effect on the women's morale. Here, apparently, she was wrong.⁸⁰

While disaffection because of continuing low rank may not have disrupted the unit's overall esprit de corps, it certainly did create some hard feelings. According to Byram, she and Julie Lefever were received quite coolly when they joined the platoon as replacements in the spring of 1944. It took her a year to discover that much of that coolness was because they arrived with ranks higher than the rest of the women--who had just been told there were no openings at those particular grade levels.⁸¹

Some women apparently were not bothered by low ranks--Mary (Kosierowski) Woynoski states "the boys did not get promotions at the time and we couldn't expect to be different"--but others were angry.⁸² The difference may have depended on the attitude of the men with whom the individual Wacs worked. White was assigned to the Adjutant General's Office and felt "no WAC in AG is given credit for knowing anything. On the whole . . . we have more responsibility and the lowest ratings in the Platoon."⁸³ She also felt that "the officers in the Adjutant General's Office lean over backwards in taking precautions not to show any favoritism to WACs . . ."⁸⁴

This last statement suggests that some of the tension between Wacs and the soldiers they served with was based not on problems of promotion, but on problems of presence; that is, some soldiers simply resented Wacs overseas or just Wacs in general. Max L. Curry, who served with the Fifth Army Signal Corps and married Louise (Lebert) Curry of the 6669th, remembers that when he first heard about the WAC he did not think it was a good idea. He also believes his fellow soldiers agreed that the whole idea of the Wacs was "no good."⁸⁵ Opinion varied from man to man, of course. Robert Wilson Bailey of the Twelfth Air Corps served alongside the Fifth Army for nine months and married Mariam (Vauchelaut) Beloit. He remembers initially being opposed to the Women's Corps because women needed too many extra facilities. The opinions of both men did change for the better after they actually worked with the Wacs. But the women had to deal with the antipathy of numerous soldiers who would never actually know them or work side by side with them.⁸⁶

That resentment surfaced in many different ways. For example,

twenty-seven Fifth Army Wacs were awarded the Bronze Star Medal for outstanding services in support of combat operations. This was a significant honor, as it meant that 37% of the unit's women were so rewarded, compared to only 2.5% of all Wacs overseas. Yet Byram's comment on the award was simply that they "all managed to get through the slurs of the enlisted men, picture taking with Generals and general hub-bub" on the day they received their medals. While being singled-out for special notice could boost the women's morale, it also increased male resentment.⁸⁷

Despite such resentment, one thing the women of the 6669th did not lack was male attention. Mendenhall recalls that they "were surrounded by men, with even the homeliest among us practically beating them off with sticks."⁸⁸ Hennessy recounts how "the American boys would cheer when they saw us and we returned every wave and smile. Some of these boys had not seen an American girl for a long time and they would ask us to say something in English. These soldiers would tell us how wonderful it was to be able to talk once again with an American girl."⁸⁹

These men desperately wanted to socialize with the Wacs, but in many instances their enthusiasm was checked by official policy. WAC regulations on social association with male Army personnel adhered to Army tradition. Unwritten but firmly engrained, this tradition forbade fraternization between enlisted personnel and officers. Enlisted Wacs could date enlisted Army men; WAC officers could date Army officers. This policy caused hard feelings on two accounts. First, certain foreign military organizations (as well as the United States Navy) did not adhere to a non-fraternization policy. Army enlisted men would become embittered when they saw, for example, a WAC officer in the

company of a British private. Second, the concept of "natural social levels" often did not work with the WAC. Because they were a very select, volunteer group, most WAC enlisted women were from a higher educational and occupational background than their male counterparts. Often they simply had little in common with the men and chose not to socialize with them.

When the 6669th first reached North Africa, however, Army authorities were trying the novel experiment of allowing officers and enlisted personnel to socialize. The Deputy Theater Commander felt that female involvement in the Army made the non-fraternization policy impossible to enforce. He cited two instances which would defeat the rule: the "Auxiliary engaged to a young man before either of them entered the service who meets the young man in NATOUSA after he has been promoted . . . ," and the "Auxiliary who meets a friend from home in NATOUSA who has become an officer since she last saw him."⁹⁰ Rather than force these people to meet secretly, he decided to change the policy.

The new policy was in force about six months and then abandoned, primarily because of enlisted men's complaints that they could not compete with officers for the women's attention. As an embittered soldier wrote in late 1943:

Recently a company of WACs moved into our neighborhood. We were all gay and lighthearted for here was our chance to talk to or even date an American girl. Now we find we are beaten off again since we cannot secure jeeps, recons, etc., as the Officers can. How many girls will walk when they can ride? Alas! The glorified American soldier must find solace in the repugnant arms of an Arabic female.⁹¹

As in all overseas locations, the women of the NATOUSA and MTO were greatly out-numbered by male personnel. At one time they were so

overwhelmed by requests for dates that the authorities limited Wacs' social activities to bi-weekly outings. This ruling gave the Wacs a much-needed justification for staying home. As White put it: "On the whole our free time doesn't seem to belong to us anymore, but to the boys. You feel like a heel to refuse to go out because we are the only American girls aside from one or two Red Cross workers and the nurses (who don't go with enlisted men of course)."92

Considering the great demands placed upon the Wacs by male Army personnel, it is disheartening to recall that male comment about the WAC was consistently negative. The following is an excerpt from a letter written by a 1st Lieutenant in North Africa in October, 1943:

The officers living in town here have all the really nice gals shackled up for the duration so the transients must take the street walkers. Such is life in the raw . . . First they issue a directive saying no officers will be allowed to be seen with girls of that character or in the houses of prostitution--the next day the same colonel issues a directive saying that the NATOUSA officers can now date Wacs. Nuf sed.⁹³

As early as May, 1943, the Office of Censorship tabulated the comments on Wacs in soldiers' mail and found that 84% of them were negative. Many soldiers threatened to jilt their girlfriends if they joined the military. While a few men praised the Corps, not one advised anyone to join.⁹⁴

This 84% negative comment figure was calculated at a time when there were only 200 Wacs overseas. Most of the men had probably never seen one. Certainly, almost none had dated a Wac, although many comments insinuated they were loose women. Such unfounded opinions were based on general hostility to a women's corps.

As the Army Chief of Military History stated after the war, Wacs

found themselves "in a man's Army with its customs and traditions somewhat shocked by the advent of a Women's Corps in its midst."⁹⁵

Social scientist Nancy Goldman emphasizes that the military is traditionally male and

the cult of masculinity . . . implies that the good fighter is the man of sexual power and exploits. In imagery, as much as in reality, this aggressive sexual symbolism is based on the assumption that an effective officer [or private] cannot be a sissy or a virgin. The more combat oriented the locus or setting, the more pronounced the sexual symbolism and mythology.⁹⁶

Perhaps without even being aware of it, men's concept of themselves as warriors was threatened by the "civilizing" influence of women, and they reacted to this with hostility. Wacs' very success as soldiers may have made it difficult for men to accept them. If Goldman is correct, male personnel automatically connected success at military undertakings and life with sexual prowess. This image would certainly conflict with the traditional expectation that a woman be pure and virginal. The men would be confused about their feelings toward the WAC, and confusion could well have created hostility.

Of course, some men criticized the Wacs for being promiscuous precisely because most were not. These men had their sexual advances rejected and were angry. Remembering the behavior of his fellow soldiers, Leroy Lembo, who worked in Fifth Army Headquarters and eventually married Betty Hoefler, agrees: "Those few I knew who tried to have sex with either Wacs or nurses and did not make out--were the ones that did the bad-mouthing."⁹⁷ Bailey reminisces: "We were young and hungry and wishful thinkers and had some fantasies, but all is individual [sic]. There was some 'getting around,' but generally [it was a] good situation."⁹⁸

In the final analysis, however, not all soldier comment on Wac sexual activity can be attributed to wishful thinking or wounded pride. As Bailey notes, there was some "getting around;" that is, some Fifth Army women (as well as Wacs elsewhere) did have intimate relations while in the service. Mendenhall concurs: "Not all 6669ers were 'pure'--they weren't (exigencies of war, you know), but I don't believe total sexual intimacy was common."⁹⁹

Mona (Skaug) Anagnostis feels, however, that it must be remembered that the girls who joined the WAC in 1942-43 were not nearly as uninhibited and sophisticated concerning sex as the girls who are in the service today [1982]. We were girls who were away from close-knit families for the first time in our lives; who had enjoyed the protection of parents and older brothers. Surprisingly, this carried over to the officers and enlisted men in the sections where we were assigned. They were always on the lookout for our safety and well-being.¹⁰⁰

Eleanora (Johnston) Lister does not recall experiencing unwanted sexual pressure and feels this was because the servicemen "knew her opinions and respected them."¹⁰¹ As Mendenhall explains, women of her generation

were taught that the one sin was premarital sex--in fact, if one engaged in it, the guy would never marry you--there were many platonic love affairs between people in love who were otherwise committed. To my knowledge only a few people in our group lost their virginity while unwed. If you were known as a "nice" girl, you weren't pressured. A man who couldn't offer marriage would not steal your virginity, for fear of spoiling your chances. A lot of "necking" went on though--this could be called foreplay and caused a lot of anguish--unrequited love was big in those days.¹⁰²

Muriel Sneed feels the whole question of Wac social relations "is crazy! Why should women in the service be any different from other women?"¹⁰³ The answer is that their actions probably were not different: as in the general population, some engaged in premarital and extramarital sex, and others did not. The difference was that

everything the Wacs did was caught in the bright light of public curiosity. If a unwed Wac became pregnant, or service men claimed (justly or not) that Wacs were loose women, it was not only the reputations of individual women that suffered: The reputation and effectiveness of the entire Corps was harmed.

This fact was painfully evident during what WAC officials dubbed the "Slander Campaign" of mid-1943. By late spring, the murmurs that seemed to have begun as postscripts in soldiers' letters broke out into full-scale scandal regarding the WAAC. Rumors spread that twenty-one Waacs had been returned from North Africa as a result of misconduct and that a whole shipload had been sent back to the United States because they were pregnant. This at a time when there were still only 200 Waacs overseas. In truth, two had been shipped home because of pregnancy, and one of those was married.¹⁰⁴

The slander campaign reached its peak on June 9, 1943, when columnist John O'Donnell of the New York Daily News and Washington Times - Herald reported that "contraceptives and prophylactic equipment will be furnished to members of the WAAC according to a super-secret agreement reached by high-ranking officers of the War Department and the WAAC chieftan . . . "¹⁰⁵ Although he partially retracted this statement the next day, the damage was done. The American public was scandalized, and WAAC enlistments and morale plummeted.

Although neither WAC authorities nor the Army ever authorized issuing prophylactics to servicewomen, there was a kernel of truth in O'Donnell's comments. In July, 1942, the Surgeon General's Office had requested the National Research Council to hold a conference on the prevention of venereal disease among female military personnel. One of

that conference's recommendations was indeed that prophylactics be made available to Waacs.¹⁰⁶

This conference was called without the knowledge of the Director of the WAAC, who was infuriated that such a delicate subject was discussed without consulting her first. After being informed of the meetings' recommendations, the Director corresponded with the chief of the Women's Interests Section, Planning and Liaison Branch of the War Department Bureau of Public Relations, who wrote:

It is difficult to say how the recommendations of the conference could be carried out without publicity that will react against the WAAC, if it does not provoke a religious and social controversy. The Army would not seem the place to promote social reform in time of war. The conferees seem to have approached this problem as a physical one from which all practical political and social factors have been eliminated. Public announcement of such a policy would result in tumultuous public disapproval . . . my opinion is that it is not in the province of the WAAC (or Army organization) to make contraceptives easily and privately available. To provide them as sanitary napkins are provided, is to make them apparently necessary or essential . . . a factor in connection with the WAAC not to be overlooked is that it is on trial before the public as the Army is not . . . speaking as a public relations specialist, I see the effect of these measures taken as a whole so contrary to public opinion and conscience as to be undesirable. They will reflect an attitude towards sexual promiscuity that whatever the practice, is not held by the majority of Americans.¹⁰⁷

Official concern about negative public reaction to the concept of issuing prophylactics to women was overwhelming. In 1954--twelve years after the fact--official WAC Historian Treadwell bluntly states that there was no truth to O'Donnell's claim that Waacs were to be furnished with contraceptives and prophylactic equipment. Technically, she was right, as the Army decided against the conference's recommendations. But in her 841-page treatise on the first five years of the WAC she does not once mention the conference's existence. As she had access to all

WAC records this omission was in all probability deliberate.¹⁰⁸

Considering the public's reaction to O'Donnell's statements, it was also understandable. America was not willing to see prophylactics issued to women even though it was common knowledge that servicemen routinely received such items. The double-standard was pervasive and accepted even by the servicewomen themselves. Fifth Army Wac Byram states, "Some of our sisters had done things which weren't complimentary to the Corps and we were all fudged [sic] by the actions of those few. As always has been the case in history, evil stories spread and were accepted much more readily than good ones."¹⁰⁹ And as always has been the case, if a Wac and a soldier had sex, it was the woman, not the man, whose reputation was besmirched.

Not all Wac-soldier relationships were sexual. Fifth Army women spent many hours simply enjoying the friendship of their male colleagues. White and Hennessy would go to the hospitals and write letters for wounded soldiers, and Sneed and Daisy (Jessup) Schafer often hitchhiked rides in order to meet the men at the other end of their teletype and telephone lines. Other Wacs shared the soldiers' company at seaside beaches, during afternoon sightseeing trips, and at innumerable dances.¹¹⁰

Of course, some of these friendships did turn into romances, and some of the romances turned into marriages. By 1947 twenty-two Fifth Army women had married men they met while members of the 6669th--or almost met. One couple, Bertha Audet and Hygin Pothier, both worked at Headquarters but did not actually meet until after the war. Six couples actually married in Italy, the first on May 8, 1944, while the echelons were still in tents in Toano and Sparanise.¹¹¹

NEWLYWEDS, BUT THE McCOY



Currently honeymooning in Rome are Mr. and Mrs. Clayton Bond. He's T-Sgt. Bond of Syracuse, N. Y., and she's Pfc. Dorothy Bond, nee Kengle of Tulsa, Okla. They were married on Friday the 13th near the 5th Army front. The guy hornning in between them is Sgt. George ('The Real) McCoy, Stars and Stripes, who had them on his "Sidewalks of Rome" radio show. The little guy is Mario, shoeshine boy.

(Staff Photo by Sgt. Grayson B. Tewksbury)

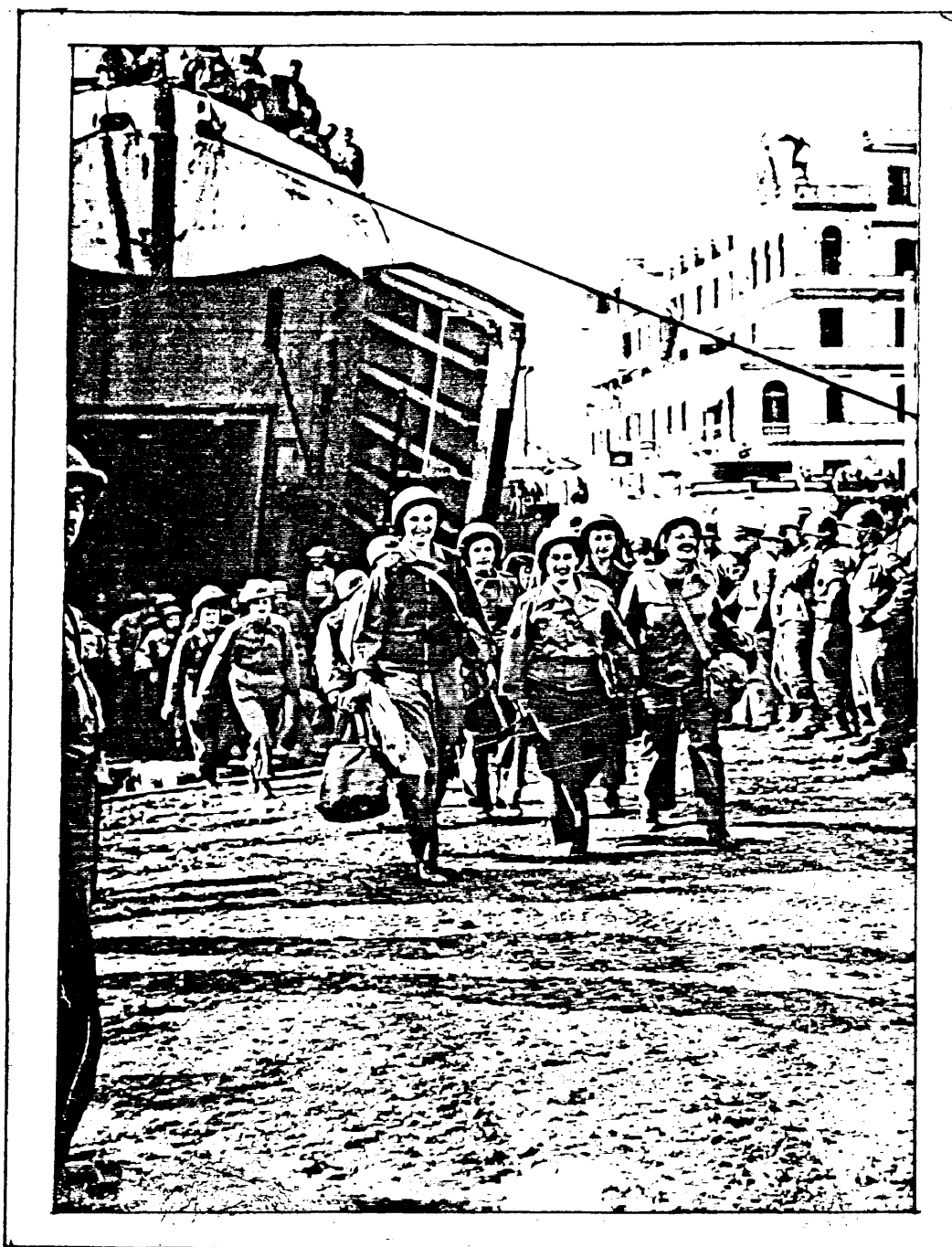
Source: Eunice (Onsrud) Hall, private collection Baltimore, Maryland

Press War/Real War

On June 4, the Forward Echelon moved from Toano to Sermoneta by truck, and the next day the Rear Echelon was trucked from Sparanise to Naples. There they boarded LST's (landing ships, tanks) for the trip to their next encampment, the beachhead of Anzio. This was the first time Wacs had travelled in the famed landing craft, and when they reached their destination the press was there to record the event.¹¹²

Troops unloading from LST's under noncombat conditions normally got into trucks while still on the boat and were driven onto shore. The Public Relations people, however, wanted the Wacs' arrival to be a bit

more dramatic, so Byram recalls filing "out of the mouth of the boat [several times] while the cameras ground away from all angles, then we got back on and loaded onto the trucks and went on our way as any sensible outfit would."¹¹³ With WAC authorities eager to use such publicity to encourage enlistment, the 6669th got a lot of coverage.



Source: Eunice (Onurud) Hall, private collection Baltimore, Maryland

Much of it was quite innocent. Articles described Wacs giving parties for Italian orphans, worshipping at Easter services on rugged hillsides, and attending "G.I. dances" with "modern-day, strong, straight young knights wearing the steel helmets of their grim business, dancing with bright-eyed, fresh-faced 'girls from back home.'"114 Some coverage, however, surely did the Corps more harm than good.

Spinola remembers she, Georgiana (Anderson) Reifsnider, and Dorothy Millard being chosen for an article entitled "Picnic on the Volturno." They and three servicemen (whom Spinola did not know) spent an afternoon being photographed hiking along the river, sitting in a wrecked German jeep, and roasting weiners around a campfire. Unfortunately, when the story appeared in the States it created the impression that the "three couples" had been gone for an entire weekend. Spinola's parents actually received hate mail accusing their daughter of being nothing better than a camp follower.¹¹⁵

Other publicity was intended to show that Wacs were still real American girls, even if they were in uniform. A 1944 radio interviewer had Onsrud explain how the Fifth Army women managed "very nicely to keep clean, pressed, starched, polished, manicured and waved," and how they "figured just because we're field soldiers is no excuse for being unfeminine."¹¹⁶ A news photo from the same year shows Reick and Marcielle Crawford carrying a full-length mirror which was not "GI, but it's never been left behind . . . [the women] struggle with it like BAR men with a tripod."¹¹⁷ Unfortunately, such stories trivialized the Wacs' vital role in the war effort. With publicity directed to emphasize the femininity of the Wacs, it ignored the essential war services which they provided. It also ignored the times the Wacs'

Source:

Georgiana
(Anderson) Reif
snider, private
collection
Baltimore,
Maryland.



SWINGTIME IN ITALY

Three WACs and their soldier boy friends drew a three-day leave from duties in Italy and decided to go on a good old American-style picnic. They swing along a temporary road, built by Allied engineers, in the Volturno River valley. They are (l. to r.): Pfc. Melvin Diamond, Pfc. Dorothy Millard, Pvt. Elgin Schrank, Pfc. Eleanor Spinola, Pvt. Gerard Stillwell and Corp. Georgiana Anderson.



Source:

"Wacks and Warns in Prospect for Petticoat Army and Navy," Newsweek, 30 March 1942, p. 33.

Parrish in The Chicago Tribune

An Old Military Problem With A New Meaning

duties led them into life-threatening situations. The Wacs were part of the real war.

While the Rear Echelon was in Anzio the Nazis were still bombing the harbor nearly every night, and the women spent a lot of time in fox holes and dugouts. Before that they had travelled on ships at risk of being torpedoed and witnessed other bombing raids.¹¹⁸ Spinola remembers one night at Naples when she

couldn't hear the noise at all but could feel the concussion of the bombs when they hit and exploded. First came the flares, usually 3 to 5 minutes after a flare was dropped the planes came over when the target was well lit. The ack-ack really started-up, exactly like a magnificent Fourth of July show. All the while the big guns were booming and the searchlights combing the skies for the planes. They got two of them, like huge moths in the beam of a flashlight. Strange that with all that action going on I wasn't frightened, just fascinated. In a little while the planes got closer, in fact the searchlights were right over the Palace [in Caserta]. Then the guns started going off, and all that noise and commotion was quite frightening. Within half an hour it was all over.¹¹⁹

Sometimes their own planes captured the Wacs' attention. White recalls that the roar of the planes on the way to the front became almost commonplace: "At first we used to rush to the windows and count the formations; we finally got used to the steady roar all day long as the different units converged at just about our location on their way to bomb Mt. Cassino."¹²⁰

The bombs occasionally fell a bit too near for comfort. One day Hennessy had a close call when a bomb exploded near the Headquarters encampment. At the time she was at the office, but when she returned to her tent there was a piece of shrapnel in her bed.¹²¹

The Wacs were at emotional risk as well as in physical danger. They worked alongside men who at any moment could be called to the front--and

in the blink of an eye be dead. Byram writes, "Everyday was filled with the continuous stream of war that meant death. Ambulances were a common sight and the blood bank carrier made many trips . . . everywhere we had been stationed [in Northern Italy] we all could always hear and see the artillery. The flashes would light up the sky for a great distance. The boom of the bombs as the air corps dropped them would echo back to us."¹²²

The presence of death was sometimes more than an echo. Amber recalls GI's digging up the body of a German soldier and telling her not to look because he was full of maggots. And Johnston remembers the stench of dead bodies piled high and wrapped only in mattress covers at Anzio.¹²³

Accidents and illness also threatened the women. Hennessy had pneumonia in Mostaganem, and Virginia (Sanderlin) Hibbard was injured badly enough to require surgery when she fell on a flight of marble stairs in Naples. Johnston recalls "riding on the fenders of a lead jeep through the fog in the passes of Northern Italy so we could see the road. Turning over in a truck which had the records--hearing the others scream but walking away without a scratch."¹²⁴

Before the war some politicians and Army officials had been unwilling to expose American women even to the moderate dangers faced by the 6669th. After the war some of those same people simply refused to recognize that women had lived with such danger--and had done so without falling apart. In one draft of The Women's Army Corps, Treadwell comments on the peril of the 6669th's situation: "The dangers of a combat area did not present any great problem in this case. During the last days in Anzio, air-raids offered the nuisance of noise and falling

shell fragments . . . The Wacs were lucky in having no injuries, in spite of some close calls."¹²⁵ The Army official critiquing Treadwell would not accept even this mild statement. He wrote in the margin: "Check for accuracy with Mathews. The author has a tendency to overplay the dangers to Wacs . . . Question this. There were no Wacs on Anzio!"¹²⁶

Of course there were Wacs at Anzio--the Rear Echelon of the 6669th. They were there until June 24, 1944, when they moved out for Tuscania. In the meantime, the Forward Echelon had moved to Rome. From June to September the average stay for both groups was two weeks, and they were stationed among the villages of Grosseto, Cecina, and Tavarnello.¹²⁷

While the Wacs probably remember the summer of '44 best as a time of constant moves, several special events varied the pace. Near Cecina on July 28, the platoon stood honor guard for King George VI of Great Britain. It was quite usual for a small group of Wacs and nurses to be included in any review as a way of recognizing their services to the Allied cause. Such days were holidays for the women, but could be tiresome as they often had to stand for hours in the hot sun. The King must have suspected this on the 28th, because he asked Millard how long they had been waiting. She answered that it had only been a short time, although in reality it had been over an hour and a half. Perhaps she felt the honor was well worth the wait. Two weeks later the women again stood review, this time for British Prime Minister Winston Churchill.¹²⁸

On July 30 the 6669th celebrated its own accomplishments by throwing a party in honor of its one year anniversary overseas. The fun featured swimming, dancing, refreshments, and a visit from General Clark. Two months later, the platoon found itself in its winter quarters two-thirds

of the way up the Italian peninsula.¹²⁹

Mud, Cold, and the Warmth of the Holidays

By the end of September both echelons were stationed in Florence, the Forward still in tents and the rear in a converted tobacco barn. In November the Forward moved to Traversa, still near Florence and still in tents. The platoon remained in these locations until the end of April, 1945.¹³⁰

Throughout the fall of 1944 the rains were intense, and the Forward Echelon practically drowned in the mud. Hennessy wrote home in October: "Boy are we living like mud rats. All you work, sleep, eat and walk is mud. The floor of our tents is mud and just outside our tents is [sic] puddles of gooey mud . . . When I look out and see the rain and mud I wonder why I joined the WACs, but then I wouldn't trade it for anything."¹³¹ Byram wrote: "Everything is on the side of hills, and so deep that even the tow trucks get stuck . . . We had a terrible time getting things set up in a sea of mud and water . . . beds had to be put on boards so we wouldn't sink down through to the other side of the world."¹³²

Cold weather soon accompanied the rain, but the Wacs realized that they enjoyed far better conditions than the combat troops. White spoke for all the Wacs: "My heart aches for the soldier at the front. At least last winter they were much further South. It must be terrible for them to realize that some people back in the States think its 'all over' here."¹³³ In contrast, the women's situation was improving. The tobacco barn was not too drafty, and by January the Forward Wacs' tents were equipped with wooden floors and walls, oil stoves, rope rugs, and

even electricity.¹³⁴

The 6669th celebrated its second overseas Christmas at Florence. The platoon sponsored a Christmas party and Open House complete with food donated from the officers' and enlisted men's mess and featuring the live Fifth Army Dance Band. Johnston remembers that many GIs came down from the front lines for just an hour or two of holiday cheer.¹³⁵

During the Christmas season the Wacs were more aware than ever of the living standard of the native population. White recalls stopping to pick up her clothing from the Italian family who did her laundry and how their

little boy [Fabrizio] who is about 4 came out with his eyes sparkling and led me into the other room to see his Christmas decorations. It wouldn't seem much to an American child but he was really thrilled with it. It was a small table fixed up with miniature figures of the madonna, baby, manger animals, wise men, etc. There was a little bridge and pane of glass to look like water and some kind of dry fern for the ground. They had a couple of plain electric bulbs illuminating it on either side. I thought how excited he would be over an American Christmas. Ours isn't much at the Waacery, but I'm going to ask permission to bring him over sometime. I always take him some candy and he just loves it. I only wish I could give him other more practical things.¹³⁶

White did continue to correspond with and send CARE packages to Fabrizio and his family after she returned to the States.

The women of the 6669th had noticed the poverty and suffering that surrounded them from the beginning. Sometimes they appeared to be appalled by and unsympathetic to the plight of the native people. In the fall of 1943 Hennessy wrote of North Africa:

The houses are close together and I can imagine more than one family lives in one house. They don't have modern electricity and the hallways are very dark and you shrink at the thought of even going into any of them. They are so filthy that it is unbearable to look in the doors.

They will pick the food right off the streets and eat it . . . You can't think of people being like that until you actually see them with your own eyes. American is [sic] far superior when you compare them with people here. . .¹³⁷

By the summer of 1944, Byram was tired of some of the Italians' attitudes, writing that "in spite of their gripings and whinings they were always glad to have the Americans around as we had plenty of money to spend, candy and gum to give away, clothes to be washed, and the mess sergeant was always dealing a few canned goods."¹³⁸

Such cynical comments seemed to justify concerns of early WAC critics that women serving in war-torn countries would become emotionally numbed and "defeminized." By May, 1945, the WAC Staff Director of the MTO apparently confirmed these fears, writing that Wacs

were affected spiritually, not by war and death so much as by long residence in war-disrupted countries where the standards of native life were low and heartbreaking destruction was widespread . . . women gradually hit a place where they had to live on the surface, and a certain tempermental change, of which they were often unaware, appeared to have made them less vulnerable to the sight of others suffering.¹³⁹

In 1946, concern about such "tempermental changes," along with recognition of the special social strains experienced by women overseas, led Army authorities to conclude that women could not sustain as long as overseas assignment as noncombat men. They recommended that women's overseas tour of duties be limited to eighteen months.¹⁴⁰

In the short run their recommendations may have been justifiable, but if the 6669th is at all representative, the long-term effects of exposure to the sufferings of war were just the opposite of what the authorities feared. In 1983 the Byram who in the summer of 1944 had been so tired of the Italians' "gripings and whinings" wrote:

I will never be the person I might have become had I stayed in the U.S. at an ordinary job. Especially after the cold winter [1944-45] in the hills of Italy. Italians who lived in the mountains had little access to food . . . They stood at our garbage cans with pails to receive the food we had left on our kits . . . In Algiers women who worked in the kitchen pulled meat scraps from the garbage, washed it off, and took it home for their family. For many of us from the rural areas such hunger was unbelievable even though our country had come through hard times.¹⁴¹

Mendenhall feels:

Little did I know then that the service years would be a time of personal growth for me, stretching my potential, learning to do things I would never have believed possible, introducing me to new human perspectives and life-long interests . . . I developed an interest in sociology and international affairs in general, and the poor in particular.¹⁴²

And Laura (Howieson) Peterson states: "It was an honor to be a part of the 6669th, every single one of the girls was outstanding. We worked hard and played hard. Most of us were very dismayed at the hunger and need we saw while overseas. The friendships formed between us helped the loneliness . . . "¹⁴³

The Wacs indeed "played hard," for tension produced by living with the wages of war had to be alleviated or troop morale and efficiency would plummet. One of the more memorable social events of the war was the "Spaghetti Bowl Football Game," held in Florence on New Year's Day, 1945. This sports classic pitted the Fifth Army against the Twelfth Air Force. It was a true extravaganza staged in front of 25,000 cheering servicemen and women, and even featured cheerleaders and Bowl Queens. It was a cold day, but living off the land had apparently prepared the Fifth for anything, for they won 20-0.¹⁴⁴

The platoon spent the rest of the winter in Florence and were still there when they learned of President Roosevelt's death in April, 1945.



Source: Daisy (Jessup) Schafer, Scrapbook, private collection
Puyallup, Washington.

Byram remembers feeling as though an immediate member of the family had died--but the troops went right on working without a let-up of any kind. After a long, cold winter the Fifth Army was once again on the move, and the 6669th was about to begin the last leg of its march through Italy.¹⁴⁸

War's End and Going Home

On April 25 the Forward Echelon moved into the country somewhere between Bologna and Modena, and four days later it was sent to Verona. The Rear reached Verona on the 30th, after a stopover in Modena. As in Florence, the two groups were in the same city but at two different locations.¹⁴⁹

It became obvious during the trip from Florence to Verona that the European war was drawing to a close. The women passed truckload after truckload of German prisoners, and in Modena White and a couple of others went to see the POW cage. Just before they arrived "one of the trucks which had 125 Germans on it turned over in the water (a sort of canal along the side of the road) and from what the boys said it must have been pretty horrible. One GI standing there finally had presence of mind enough to get an ax from another truck and chop the back out so they could get to the men but even so, 21 died . . . "¹⁵⁰ The GI's were probably slow to react because for over three years they had been conditioned to kill Germans, not save them. Already, the rules were beginning to change.

V-E Day was May 8, and the 6669th was still in Verona. Byram remembers the Italians celebrating by shooting guns, setting off fireworks, and lighting huge bonfires. In contrast, the Wacs felt curiously subdued by the end of the European war: hostilities were over, but they were still thousands of miles away from home and busier than ever. While war's end lessened the demand for combat personnel, it actually increased the need for Wacs. Occupation and redeployment vastly expanded the clerical and communications duties performed by the Wacs.¹⁵¹

On May 17 the 6669th made its last move, this time to Gardone-Riviera on the shores of Lake Garda in the foothills of the Alps. The view was beautiful, but the lodgings were not. Initially housed in a pleasant villa, the Wacs soon moved to make room for USO and other higher-ranking women. They ended up in an old convent which nearly burnt to the ground on June 13. No one was injured, but nineteen women lost everything except the pajamas and bathrobes they wore out of the building. The incident was particularly annoying as there had already been one minor fire, yet nothing had been done to improve the safety of the women's quarters.¹⁵²

The fire only increased the women's desires to go home. The platoon had been overseas for nearly two years without any serious casualties, and as Hennessy put it: "Inspite of accidents happening to us, no one has been hurt yet. We are beginning to think our luck will run out and hope we get home before it does."¹⁵³

Going home depended primarily on how many discharge points a person had. All personnel received discharge points based on their total years of service, years spent overseas, campaigns participated in, and combat time. The higher a soldier's total, the sooner he or she could go home. Fifth Army Wacs were some of the first women to be discharged, as they had been among the first sent abroad and thus had accumulated a lot of points. At a time when the discharge level for Wacs was around 44 points, Onsrud had 69 and Byram had 77, the highest WAC score in the MTO.¹⁵⁴

So small groups of Fifth Army women started to go home as early as June, 1945. The women who remained in Italy through the summer of '45 performed a variety of jobs, and several were able to take advantage of

some special postwar opportunities. Vivian Watson, Cecelia Sweeney, and Dittwald worked with female German POW's in Modena, and Byram went to Germany and Austria to interrogate Axis prisoners. Later she attended college in Florence under a special Army program, and Beloit (by now she was Bailey, having married Robert Bailey in January) got a pass to travel to Augsburg and spend a leave with her husband.¹⁵⁶

But the war was over, and the demise of the 6669th Central Postal Directory Corps Headquarters Platoon inevitable. The unit was finally discontinued on August 4, 1945. Kosierowski thinks she was probably the last Fifth Army Wac to leave Italy when in late 1945 she set out for Germany to work as a chief clerk in Frankfurt.¹⁵⁷

Most Fifth Army women, however, left Italy for the United States, not Germany. Their trips home would have been similar to Byram's, who describes leaving Caserta:

I left early one morning for Casablanca by air--the usual bucket seats and flight over Algiers, Oran, etc. to Casa[blanca]. We stayed at a hotel there for air travellers--good food, beds, and companions. Wacs, nurses, from all over the Mediterranean theater were waiting to go and as the weather permitted a list of names went up and we had to stay around for twenty-four hours, reporting every couple of hours. Finally Clara and I were on the list so off we went. This time we had luxury on our side--plush seats, agreeable companions . . . We landed at the Azores for refueling and a meal and then on to Labrador where the temperature was down to freezing . . . we stayed awake as we flew over the east coast passing over Boston and other cities. The maze of lights was beautiful after coming from the old country . . . before we knew it we were circling over LaGuardia field, a row of lights marking the edge of the bay and the landing strip.¹⁵⁸

As Byram and the others set foot on American soil, they may have wondered what their lives would be like now that their time as Fifth Army Wacs was over. Would their futures be any different from those of

the millions of American women who stayed home during the war? Army historians such as Treadwell would look at the 6669th and judge it and its members as unique in their success and esprit de corps. Had the women of the 6669th really been any different from the population in general or from other Wacs? A statistical examination of their backgrounds and their lives after 1945 will help answer these questions.

FOOTNOTES

¹"Platoon History," a manuscript written in the mid-1940's by various members of the 6669th, original now in private collection of Lt. Col. Miriam Butler (Ret.) of Reno, Nevada; "Revocation of General Orders, 7 June 1943, Modern Military Records Division, Record Group 165, G-1 WAC Decimal File, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

²"Discontinuance of 6669th WAC Headquarters Platoon (OVHD)," 3 August 1945, WAC Decimal File, NARS.

³Genevieve (Mendenhall) Shoemaker, Questionnaire filled out 1983, original now in private collection of Peg Poeschl Siciliano, Traverse City, Michigan. Upon first reference members of the 6669th will be cited by their full name, maiden and married, when known. Subsequent references will be made by whatever name they served in the WAC under.

⁴Georgiana (Anderson) Reifsnider, Marjorie (Byram) Russo, Dorothy (Dittwald) Haley, Elizabeth (Hennessy) Blazek, Betty (Huyek) Hoefler Lembo, Daisy (Jessup) Schafer, Louise (Lebert) Curry, Eunice (Onsrud) Hall, Norma Reick, Mona (Skaug) Anagnostis, Margaret (Stringfellow) Malley, Miriam (Vauchelaut) Beloit, Questionnaires filled out 1983, originals in Siciliano collection.

⁵Dittwald to Siciliano, 30 January 1985, in Siciliano collection.

⁶Mattie E. Treadwell, The Women's Army Corps (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Department of the Army, 1954), pp. 102, 632, 658; "Processing Swift for Women's Army," New York Times, 21 July 1942, p. 21; "WAAC School for Florida," New York Times, 19 February 1943, p. 14; "New Camp for WAACS," New York Times, 19 February 1943, p. 14; "Fort Des Moines Closed as Army Post," New York Times, 17 February 1946, p. 20.

⁷Treadwell, p. 634.

⁸Treadwell, pp. 634-666; "Rigorous Course is Set for WAAC," New York Times, 7 June 1942, p. 26; Office of War Information, Women and the War (Washington, D.C., 1942), p. 4; Mary Murphy, Questionnaire filled out 1983, in Siciliano collection.

⁹Treadwell, pp. 634-48; Office of War Information, Women and War, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰Treadwell, p. 578.

¹¹Ibid., p. 579.

¹²Ibid., p. 71.

¹³"Movement of the 160th, 161st, and 162d Women's Army Auxiliary Corps Post Headquarters Companies," April-May 1943, WAC Decimal File, NARS.

¹⁴Onsrud Questionnaire; Mertice White, "Eighteen Months in Italy," unpublished manuscript in her private collection, Pulaski, New York; Treadwell, pp. 124-126.

¹⁵"Movement of WAAC Companies," 12 May 1943, WAC Decimal File, NARS.

¹⁶White, "Eighteen Months," pp. 2-3; "Officer Personnel for 182nd WAAC Headquarters Platoon," 3 June 1943, WAC Decimal File, NARS.

¹⁷Treadwell, p. 585; Onsrud Questionnaire; White, "Eighteen Months," p. 2.

¹⁸Treadwell, p. 585.

¹⁹"Platoon History," p. 1.

²⁰"650 Wacs Defy the Subs," Woman's Home Companion, 7 October 1943, p. 20.

²¹Onsrud Questionnaire; White, "Eighteen Months," p. 2.

²²Mendenhall Questionnaire.

²³"Platoon History," p. 1; Onsrud Questionnaire; White, "Eighteen Months," p. 3.

²⁴"Platoon History," p. 1.

²⁵Onsrud to unknown, 9 September 1943, in her private collection in Baltimore, Maryland.

²⁶White, "Eighteen Months," pp. 3-4; Hennessy "A Wac in Africa I," unpublished manuscript in her private collection in Des Moines, Iowa, p. 1; Onsrud to unknown, 9 September 1943, private collection Baltimore, Maryland.

²⁷Eleanor (Spinola) Lange to Siciliano, 12 April 1985, in Siciliano's private collection.

²⁸Onsrud Questionnaire; White, "Eighteen Months," p. 3; Reick Questionnaire.

²⁹Byram to "Dear Folks," 30 January 1945, in her private collection, Mt. Vernon, Washington; Mary (Kosierowski) Woynoski, Questionnaire filled out 1983; White, "Eighteen Months," p. 4; White to "Dear Folks," 10 March 1944, 21 April 1944, 12 & 23 July, 1944, 18 October 1944, 24 November 1944, in private collection, Pulaski, New York.

³⁰Hennessy, "A Wac in Africa I," p. 1.

³¹Ibid.; Lebert to Siciliano, 24 January 1985, Siciliano's private collection; White to "Dear Folks," 5 October 1944 in private collection, Pulaski, New York; Jessup, Scrapbook clipping "Wacs Have Many Kinds of Duties in Italy Sector," p. 9, in her private collection, Pulaski, New York.

³²Byram to "Dear Aunt Lou & Lindy," 29 June 1944 and to "Dear Folks," 30 January 1945 in private collection, Mt. Vernon, Washington; Onsrud Questionnaire; Jessup Scrapbook, private collection Puyallup, Washington; White to "Dear Folks," 12 July 1944 in private collection, Pulaski, New York.

³³Treadwell, pp. 155-161; White, "Eighteen Months," p. 4,; Stringfellow Questionnaire.

³⁴Treadwell, p. 371.

³⁵Treadwell, p. 367; "General Clark is Proud of WACS in Italy," Philadelphia Record, 13 April 1944; Kosierowski Questionnaire; "Wacks' War Bonnets," Time, 1 June 1942, p. 31; "Uniform Regulations for Women's Army Auxiliary Corps," 21 March 1942 and "Changes in the Corps," December 1944, WAC Decimal File, NARS.

³⁶Treadwell, p. 36.

³⁷Treadwell, p. 156; U.S. Congress, Appendix to the Congressional Record, "Change WAC Uniform--Extension of Remarks of Hon. Emanuel Celler, 78th Congr., 2nd Sess., 26 April 1944, Congressional Record, p. A2002.

³⁸Treadwell, pp. 156-164.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰"Platoon History,"; U.S. Congress, House, 79th Congr., 1st Sess., 11 July 1945, Congressional Record, p. 7416.

⁴¹Treadwell, pp. 367 & 421.

⁴²"Platoon History."

⁴³Hennessy, "A Wac in Africa I," pp. 1-2; Eleanora (Johnston) Lister, Questionnaire filled out 1983 in Siciliano collection; Onsrud to unknown, 9 September 1943, in private collection, Baltimore, Maryland; Reick Questionnaire, Spinola to Siciliano, 12 April 1985, Siciliano collection; White, "Eighteen Months," p. 5.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Johnston Questionnaire; Onsrud Questionnaire.

⁴⁶Onsrud Questionnaire; Onsrud to unknown, 9 September 1943, private collection, Baltimore, Maryland.

⁴⁷Lucy (Amber) Wright, Questionnaire filled out 1983, in Siciliano collection; Onsrud Questionnaire; Onsrud to unknown, 9 September 1943, in private collection, Baltimore, Maryland.

⁴⁸"Incoming Message," Algiers to WAR, 17 May 1943, WAC Decimal File, NARS; "Platoon History," p. 1; Dittwald to Siciliano, 30 January 1985, in Siciliano collection.

⁴⁹U.S. Congress, House, 78th Congr., 2nd Sess., 15 May 1944, Congressional Record, p. 4524.

⁵⁰Capt. Barjou to 1st Lt. Foster, 17 October 1943; "WAC Corporal Works Seven Day Week as Secretary to General Clark in Italy," 19 January 1944; "Italy," WAC News Letter, Vol. 1, No. 13, p. 5, WAC Decimal File, NARS; Byram, untitled and unpublished manuscript, p. 57 & 61 in her private collection in Mt. Vernon, Washington; Kosierowski Questionnaire; Mendenhall Questionnaire; Jessup Scrapbook, clipping October 1944, in private collection Puyallup, Washington; White, "Eighteen Months."

⁵¹White to "Dear Folks," 17 October 1943, private collection, Pulaski, New York.

⁵²Mendenhall Questionnaire.

⁵³"Platoon History," p. 1; Treadwell, p. 228.

⁵⁴Amber Questionnaire; Johnston Questionnaire.

⁵⁵Spinola to Siciliano, 12 April 1985, Siciliano collection.

⁵⁶Ibid.; Onsrud Questionnaire.

⁵⁷Spinola to Siciliano, 12 April 1985, Siciliano collection.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid.; Onsrud to unknown, 21 November 1943, private collection Baltimore, Maryland.

⁶⁰Spinola to Siciliano, 12 April 1985, Siciliano collection.

⁶¹"Platoon History," p. 2; "WAC Headquarters in Historic Italian Castle," November 1943, Onsrud Scrapbook private collection Baltimore, Maryland.

⁶²White, "Eighteen Months," p. 8; Anderson, "Interview Between Cpl. Georgiana Anderson and Hugh Douglas," ca. May, 1945, transcript of radio interview in her private collection, Baltimore, Maryland; Onsrud to unknown, 21 November 1943 and Onsrud Questionnaire, private collection Baltimore, Maryland; Spinola to Siciliano, 12 April 1985, Siciliano collection.

⁶³"Platoon History;" Questionnaires in Siciliano collection.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.; Treadwell, p. 367.

⁶⁶"Platoon History," p. 2; "Statistics Prove," WAC News Letter, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 2, WAC Decimal File, NARS.

⁶⁷Jessup Scrapbook, clipping "Wacs Have Many Kinds of Duties in Italy Sector," p. 9, private collection, Puyallup, Washington.

⁶⁸White to "Dear Folks," 21 April 1943, private collection Pulaski, New York.

⁶⁹Byram to "Dear Folks," 16 June 1944 and 7 April 1945 private collection Mt. Vernon, Washington.

⁷⁰Onsrud Questionnaire; Onsrud, "Boys and Girls in Army Service," April 1944, transcript of radio interview, private collection Baltimore, Maryland; White to "Dear Folks," 27 May 1944 private collection Pulaski, New York.

⁷¹Byram, composition in her private collection, Mt. Vernon, Washington.

⁷²Mark Clark, Calculated Risk (Harper and Brothers, New York, 1950), p. 339; "Platoon History," p. 3; "A.F.H.Q. Advanced Press H.Q.--For Immediate Release," 24 April 1944 and "Headquarters Fifth Army Commendation," n.d., WAC Decimal File, NARS.

⁷³"Citation--Meritorious Service Unit Plaque," June 1945, and Capt. Barjou to 1st Lt. Foster, 17 October 1943, WAC Decimal File, NARS; Treadwell, p. 367.

⁷⁴Treadwell, p. 367.

⁷⁵"Gen. Clark is Proud of WACS in Italy," Philadelphia Record, 13 April 1944; Charles Saltzman to Major Westray Battle Boyce, 23 December 1943, WAC Decimal File, NARS.

⁷⁶Treadwell, p. 367; Westray Battle Boyce to Colonel Charles Saltzman, 18 December 1943, WAC Decimal File, NARS.

⁷⁷"Platoon History," p. 3; Onsrud Questionnaire; Byram to unknown, February 1945, private collection Mt. Vernon, Washington; White, "Eighteen Months," p. 11; White to "Dear Folks," 12 May 1944, private collection, Pulaski, New York.

⁷⁸Spinola to Siciliano, 12 April 1985, Siciliano collection.

⁷⁹White to "Dear Folks," 7 February 1945, private collection Pulaski, New York; Byram to "Dear Folks," 30 January 1945, private collection Mt. Vernon, Washington.

⁸⁰Treadwell, pp. 367 and 373.

⁸¹Byram manuscript, pp. 30-31, private collection Mt. Vernon, Washington.

⁸²Kosierowski Questionnaire.

⁸³White to "Dear Folks," 4 May 1945, private collection Pulaski, New York.

⁸⁴White, "Eighteen Months," p. 7.

⁸⁵Max L. Curry, Questionnaire filled out 1985, Siciliano collection.

⁸⁶Ibid.; Robert Wilson Bailey, Questionnaire filled out 1985, Siciliano collection.

⁸⁷"First Wacs in Field End Service in Italy," New York Times, 4 August 1945, p. 8; Treadwell, p. 744; Byram manuscript, p. 69.

⁸⁸Mendenhall Questionnaire.

⁸⁹Hennessey, "A Wac in Africa I," p. 3.

⁹⁰E.S. Hughes to Colonel Oveta Culp Hobby, 17 April 1943, WAC Decimal File, NARS.

⁹¹Jessup Scrapbook, clipping "Dear Editor:," ca. November 1943, p. 4, private collection Puyallup, Washington; Treadwell, pp. 375-376.

⁹²White to "Dear Folks," 24 November 1943 private collection Pulaski, New York.

⁹³"United States Military Censorship--Registered Letter No. 1751, 5 November 1943, WAC Decimal File, NARS.

⁹⁴Treadwell, pp. 373 and 468-469.

⁹⁵Orlando Ward to General of the Army George C. Marshall, 2 August 1950, WAC Decimal File, NARS.

⁹⁶Nancy Goldman, "Women in the Armed Forces," in Changing Women in a Changing Society, ed. Joan Huber (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 146.

⁹⁷Leroy Lembo, Questionnaire filled out 1985, Siciliano collection.

⁹⁸Bailey Questionnaire.

⁹⁹Mendenhall to Siciliano, 24 January 1985, Siciliano collection.

¹⁰⁰Skaug Questionnaire.

- 101 Johnston Questionnaire.
- 102 Mendenhall Questionnaire.
- 103 Muriel Sneed, Questionnaire filled out 1983, Siciliano collection.
- 104 U.S. Congress, House, 78th Congr., 1st Sess., 10 June 1943, Congressional Record, p. 5679.
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- 106 "Report of Conference on the Prevention of Venereal Disease in Female Personnel of the Armed Forces," 27 July 1942, WAC Decimal File, NARS.
- 107 Emily Newell Blair to Mrs. Hobby, 13 August 1942, WAC Decimal File, NARS.
- 108 Treadwell, p. 203.
- 109 Byram manuscript, p. 39, private collection Mt. Vernon, Washington.
- 110 White to "Dear Folks," 4 February 1944, private collection Pulaski, New York; Sneed Questionnaire; Byram manuscript, pp. 38-39, private collection Mt. Vernon, Washington; Spinola to Siciliano, 12 April 1985, Siciliano collection.
- 111 "182 WAC Headquarters Platoon or 669 WAC Headquarters Platoon--Address, the World," 1947 newsletter in private collection of Hannah (Worton) Richards, Abilene, Texas.
- 112 "Platoon History," p. 3.
- 113 Byram manuscript, pp. 32-33, private collection Mt. Vernon, Washington; Worton Questionnaire, filled out 1983, Siciliano collection.
- 114 Jessup Scrapbook, clipping "Bremerton Girl Overseas," 1944, p. 7, private collection Puyallup, Washington, D.C.; Onsrud, "Boys and Girls in Army Service," April 1944, transcript of radio interview, private collection Baltimore, Maryland; "Our WAC Georgiana Anderson Lives in a Castle in Italy," clipping in Anderson collection, Baltimore, Maryland.
- 115 Spinola to Siciliano, 12 April 1985, Siciliano collection.
- 116 "Radio Section, PRO, AFHQ--WAC Recording for WDBP," April 1944, transcript of interview with Onsrud, private collection Baltimore, Maryland.
- 117 Jessup Scrapbook, clipping "Full-length Mirror," p. 13, private collection Puyallup, Washington.

- 118Onsrud Questionnaire; White, "Eighteen Months," p. 12.
- 119Spinola to Siciliano, 12 April 1985, Siciliano collection.
- 120White, "Eighteen Months," p. 9.
- 121Hennessy to Siciliano, 24 January 1985, Siciliano collection.
- 122Byram manuscript, p. 39, private collection Mt. Vernon, Washington.
- 123Amber Questionnaire; Johnston Questionnaire.
- 124Johnston Questionnaire; White to "Dear Folks," 22 October 1943, private collection Pulaski, New York; 1947 Newsletter in Worton collection, Abilene, Texas.
- 125"Critique of Women's Army Corps," ca. 1950, WAC Decimal File, NARS.
- 126Ibid.
- 127"Platoon History," p. 3.
- 128Byram manuscript, p. 42, private collection Mt. Vernon, Washington; "Platoon History," p. 4.
- 129"Platoon History," p. 4.
- 130Ibid.
- 131Hennessy to "Dear Mom," October 1944, private collection Des Moines, Iowa.
- 132Byram manuscript, p. 47, private collection Mt. Vernon, Washington.
- 133White to "Dear Folks," 30 December 1944, private collection Pulaski, New York.
- 134Hennessy, "A Wac in Italy," unpublished manuscript in private collection Des Moines, Iowa; Byram to "Dear Georgie," 18 February 1945, private collection Mt. Vernon, Washington.
- 135White to "Dear Folks," 18 December 1944, private collection Pulaski, New York; "Boys and Girls in Army Service," clipping December 1944, Onsrud collection Baltimore, Maryland; Johnston Questionnaire.
- 136White to "Dear Folks," 18 December 1944, private collection Pulaski, New York.
- 137Hennessy, "A Wac in Africa III," unpublished manuscript, p. 2, private collection Des Moines, Iowa.

138Byram manuscript, p. 37, private collection Mt. Vernon, Washington.

139Treadwell, pp. 377-378.

140Ibid., p. 587.

141Byram Questionnaire.

142Mendenhall Questionnaire.

143Laura (Howieson) Peterson, Questionnaire filled out 1983, Siciliano collection.

144Onsrud Questionnaire; Jessup Scrapbook, clippings "Spaghetti Bowl Game," January 1945, private collection Puyallup, Washington.

145Mendenhall Questionnaire.

146"Platoon History," pp. 3-6.

147Reick Questionnaire; Johnston Questionnaire; Kosierowski Questionnaire.

148Byram to "Dear Folks," 14 April 1945, private collection Mt. Vernon, Washington.

149"Platoon History," p. 5.

150White, "Eighteen Months," p. 15; White to "Dear Folks," 24 May 1945, private collection Pulaski, New York.

151Byram manuscript, pp. 63-65, private collection Mt. Vernon, Washington.

152"Platoon History," p. 6; Byram manuscript, pp. 65 & 69, private collection Mt. Vernon, Washington; Onsrud questionnaire; Hennessy to "Dear Mom," 14 June 1945, private collection Des Moines, Iowa.

153Hennessy to "Dear Mom," 14 June 1945, private collection Des Moines, Iowa.

154Treadwell, 727-731; "Boys and Girls in Army Service," 29 May 1945 clipping in Onsrud private collection, Baltimore, Maryland; Byram to "Dear Mother," 3 July 1945, private collection Mt. Vernon, Washington.

155Onsrud Questionnaire.

156Byram manuscript, pp. 73-76, private collection Mt. Vernon, Washington; Vauchelet Questionnaire; "Platoon History," p. 5.

157"Discontinuance of 666th WAC Headquarters Platoon (OVHD)," 3 August 1945, WAC Decimal File, NARS; "First Wacs in Field End Service in Italy," New York Times, 4 August 1945, p. 8; Kosierowski Questionnaire.

158Byram manuscript, p. 82, private collection Mt. Vernon, Washington.

CHAPTER III

AN EXTRAORDINARY GROUP OF WOMEN

The 6669th WAC Headquarters Platoon was not only a unique unit, but its members were also extraordinary in comparison to their countrywomen and even to their fellow Wacs. Among themselves, members' varied backgrounds caused differences in their wartime experiences. These facts became apparent after a twelve-page questionnaire (see Appendix B) was sent to seventy-four members of the 6669th. Twenty-six women responded.

This response rate allows valid generalizations to be made about the 6669th. One must be cautious, however, when interpreting the survey results. First, the small number of respondents means that minor statistical fluctuations should not be overemphasized, as shifts in the answers of only one or two women will noticeably change the numbers. Second, the respondents were not a totally random sample, and certain predictable biases must be kept in mind.¹

By the mid-1980's many of the Fifth Army Women had probably died, so those still alive would tend to be the younger members. Also, people who take the trouble to answer a twelve-page questionnaire probably have either strong negative or strong positive feelings about the subject matter. In the case of these women, the diaries, letters, and commentaries they sent back with their surveys indicate that most had a positive attitude toward the service. Lastly, the method of contacting

these women may have skewed the sample.

The Army did not keep unit lists of World War II Wac addresses, so these women were located using a thirty-year-old directory provided by Lt. Col. Miriam L. Butler, an officer who had served with the 6669th. Letters reached several of the women on that list. While only one still lived at the same address, neighbors and relatives forwarded other letters. Some of the women so reached were in contact with other Fifth Army veterans and were able to provide current addresses for them. Numerically this method was highly efficient. Yet as the women were contacted through a network of friends who had kept in touch for over three decades, members who did not socialize with that set of women are not represented. Neither are women who simply were poor correspondents.

The interpretative problems posed by these biases are not insurmountable. When observations based on small differences in percentages are made, they will be clearly noted as speculative. Logic will suggest those times when the respondents' youth may have influenced survey results, and it will be assumed that their judgments about the WAC are skewed toward the positive. This assumption of a positive bias will also compensate for the women having belonged to a particular network of friends. Generally, people who share common good experiences are more apt to want to remember those times and maintain relevant friendships than those who did not enjoy themselves.

Survey results will be examined in two ways. First, Fifth Army Wac demographic characteristics will be compared to those of the general population and, in some cases, to those of the entire WAC. Army regulations assured that members of the 6669th would not be a nationwide random sample of women who were simply interested in serving overseas.

By law, all recruits had to be between 21 and 45 years of age, and for this particular unit they had to be white, and, of course, female. Also, the Army concentrated recruiting efforts in certain states and regions. A statistical comparison of Fifth Army Wacs to the entire nation would not have been nearly as meaningful as one between them and the pool of people from which the Army recruited all Wacs. Therefore, every effort was made to obtain information on populations as similar to Army prescriptions as possible. If 1940 census statistics on white females, 19-37 (when recruiting started in two years, these women would be 21-39), from the Fifth Army Wacs' states of residence (see Appendix C) were available, they were used. Table columns using this type of census statistics are labeled "Comparative General Population - 1940." When less specific statistics had to be used, this is so noted. For example, if there were no statistics for whites only, a note indicates that this particular set of numbers includes blacks. For comparisons in the postwar period, ages and states were adjusted accordingly. If table columns are marked "Total Population," statistics refer to the nationwide population, all ages and races, male and female.²

This chapter's second section shows how differences in Fifth Army Wac educational and family backgrounds affected their experiences in the service. Six of the Wacs' personal characteristics (age, generation in this country, education, religion, politics, and region of the country in which they grew up) are correlated with four aspects of their service experience (reasons for joining, whether they received Bronze Stars, attitudes towards various aspects of military life, and social relations). These are selected characteristics, and their study by no means gives any definitive answers concerning the influence of various

backgrounds on the military experience. Certain trends, however, are suggested.

Demographic Comparisons

Prewar. From its inception, the Women's Army Corps was intended to be a specialized organization which employed a small number of skilled workers, rather than a large number of unskilled personnel. As early as 1941 Army planners noted that "both educational and technical qualifications should be exceptionally high to make of the projected organization an elite corps, in order that it may quickly attain the highest reputation for both character and professional excellence." Officials felt the maintenance of "high" recruiting standards would go a long way towards achieving this goal. Recruits had to be at least twenty-one, have a high school diploma, and be either single or married with no dependents. Preference was given to those who had experience in clerical, communications, teaching, or management jobs. These characteristics were deemed even more desirable when choosing women to go overseas. Such women were also selected for their strength of character, firmness of discipline, maturity, and emotional stability.³

Army directives strongly influenced the type of woman chosen to become a Wac. One would therefore expect Fifth Army Wacs, the creme de la creme of the Women's Army Corps, to be better educated, more apt to be single, and more likely to have clerical, communications, or professional backgrounds than the average American woman or even other Wacs. As an assurance of maturity, one might also expect members of the 6669th to have been older than the average Wac.

Contrary to this last expectation, Table 1 (page 111) appears to

indicate that members of the 6669th were somewhat younger, not older, than the average Wac. Nearly all Fifth Army women volunteered for overseas duty, and they were selected for that honor by female company officers. Therefore, the incidence of younger women cannot be explained by the tendency of male officers to select glamorous young women for popular duties. Younger women may have been better qualified physically for strenuous duty or may have been more willing to volunteer for adventurous assignments. The most likely explanation for the age discrepancy shown in Table 1, however, is that the initial sample of Fifth Army Wacs was biased toward younger women.

Table 1
Age Comparisons - 1940's

	Fifth Army Wacs 1942-43	Waacs Enlisted & Officers May, 1943*
Under 25	48%	41%
25-29	36%	28%
30-34	0%	14%
35-39	12%	10%
40-44	4%	6%
45 and over	0%	1%
	N=25	N=56,164

*SOURCE: Mattie E. Treadwell, The Women's Army Corps, (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Department of the Army, 1954), p. 767.

This bias may also have affected the statistics in Table 2 (page 112). They indicate that Fifth Army Wacs were much more likely to be single than the comparative general population and somewhat more likely to be so than other Wacs. The greater incidence of single, widowed, or divorced women in the WAC as a whole is explained by the requirement that women who enlisted be free of family obligations. The difference

in the percentage of single women between the 6669th and Wacs in general, however, may very well result from the Fifth Army sample being biased toward youth. The younger women were less likely to be married.

Table 2
Marital Comparisons - 1940's

	Fifth Army Wacs 1942-43	Comparative General Population 1940*	Waacs Enlisted & Officers May, 1943**
Single	83%	34%	70%
Married	4%	64%	15%
Widowed	8%	1%	15%
Divorced	4%	2%	
	N=24	N=6,845,445	N=56,164

*SOURCE: 1940 Census of Population, vol. 4, Characteristics by Age, parts 2, 3 and 4, table 10.

**SOURCE: Treadwell, The Women's Army Corps, p. 767.

As can be seen in Table 3 (page 113), in 1942 members of the 6669th were better educated than both the comparative general population and their fellow Wacs. In fact, the table shows that their educational background most closely matched that of WAC officers. As over 90% of Fifth Army Wacs were enlisted women, this is an exceptional comparison. The possible youth of the 6669th sample does no violence to this finding. While one could argue that younger women may have benefited from a better educational system than older ones, one could also argue that older women would have had more time to pursue a higher education. The two possibilities cancel each other out, and one is left with a highly-educated group of Fifth Army Wacs.

These well-educated women also possessed extensive clerical expertise. They came from secretarial backgrounds in much larger proportions than either women in the comparative general population or

TABLE 3
Educational Comparisons - 1940's

	Fifth Army Wacs 1942-43	Comparative General Population 1940*	Waacs Enlisted & Officer May, 1943**	Waacs Enlisted & Officer July, 1943***	Enlisted Wacs May, 1944****	Female Officers 1946****
None	0%	1%	0%	--	0%	0%
Grammar School	0%	35%	8%	--	9%	3%
Some High School	4%	22%	24%	18%	29%	4%
High School Diploma	28%	28%	42%	31%	42%	28%
Post-High School						
Vocational						
Training	24%	--	--	15%	--	--
Some College	32%	8%	16%	16%	14%	27%
College Degree	12%	4%	9%	9%	5%	20%
Graduate Work	0%	1%	1%	--	1%	15%
Not Reported/Other		1%	0%	11%	--	--
	N=25	N=8,247,314	N=56,164	N=Not given	N=Not given	N=8,079

*SOURCE: 1940 Census of Population, vol. 2, Characteristics of the Population, parts 1, 2 and 3, table 19.

**SOURCE: Treadwell, The Women's Army Corps, p. 767.

***SOURCE: "Education of Enlistees as of July, 1943: Gallup Poll," WAC Decimal File, NARS.

****SOURCE: "Army Data, 1946," WAC Decimal File, NARS.

the WAC in general (see Table 4). This clerical concentration is so great that it eliminates the possibility of the members of the 6669th having more professional work experience than average. Such a concentration developed because the Army insisted that women sent overseas be extremely efficient at whatever job they were assigned. A woman shipped abroad was taking up valuable shipping space and was expected to replace men at more than a one-to-one ratio.

Table 4
Job Comparisons - 1940's

	Fifth Army Wacs 1942-43*	Comparative General Population 1940 (inc. blacks)**	Waacs Enlisted & Officers May, 1943***
Professional	9%	13%	14%
Clerical	74%	34%	45%
Domestic			
Service	3%	15%	17%
Service			
Worker	9%	11%	--
Agriculture	0%	1%	.3%
Skilled			
Managers	0%	21%	17%
Students	6%	--	--
Uncoded	0%	--	6%
	N=34	N=3,861,831	N=56,164

*The women were asked "What was your occupation before joining the WAC?" If they gave two, each one was recorded as a separate answer. Consequently, these statistics include more than twenty-six responses.

**SOURCE: 1940 Census of Population, vol. 3, The Labor Force, parts 2, 3 4, and 5, table 13.

***SOURCE: Treadwell, The Women's Army Corps, p. 767.

Employment background, education, marital status, and age were all Wac social characteristics which were greatly affected by Army regulations covering recruitment of female personnel. There are several

other social characteristics not regulated by the Army which may have influenced a woman's decision to join the service. These include religion, political leanings, parents' educational and employment backgrounds, and the size of hometowns.

One would surmise that the traditionally protective attitude of Catholics toward young women would lead to an underrepresentation of Catholic women in the 6669th. Table 5 indicates that this did not happen. Protestants and Catholics were members of the 6669th in nearly the same proportions as in the general population. Jews comprise almost all of the "other" category in column 2. Their absence in the Fifth Army group is not as significant as it might seem. In a sample of twenty-six, it would take only one woman to change that percentage to 4%. So 0% is not too far off the national average.

Table 5
Religious Comparisons - 1940's

	Fifth Army Wacs 1942-43	Total Population (from appropriate states)*
Protestant	65%	60%
Catholic	35%	35%
Other	0%	5%
	N=26	N=23,867,220

*SOURCE: U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies: 1936 (1941), vol. 1, table 13.

While religious identification alone may have caused Catholics to be underrepresented, the existence of another variable, political affiliation, outweighed the influence of religion. Before World War II Democrats were the champions of internationalism while Republicans were the defenders of isolationism. It would be logical for Democrats to

have been overrepresented in the 6669th. As Table 6 shows, this is exactly what happened. This Democratic overrepresentation also explains why Catholics were not underrepresented. Most Catholics were Democrats, and their political affiliation apparently outweighed any religious bias against volunteering. Furthermore, a woman joining the Army was doing a rather nontraditional thing, causing one to expect Independents to be better represented here than in the general public. Interestingly enough, the proportion of Independents in the Fifth Army was slightly smaller than that nationwide.⁴

Table 6
Political Comparisons - 1940's

	Fifth Army Wacs 1942-43	Total Population Averages for 1940, 44 & 48*
Democrats	62%	42%
Republicans	31%	37%
Independents	8%	20%
Others	0%	2%
	N=26	N=not given

*SOURCE: George H. Gallup, The Gallup Poll, Public Opinion 1935-71, (New York; Random House, 1972), pp. 202, 235 and 765.

With the majority of Fifth Army Wacs being Democrats, it is only to be expected that most would have voted for Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1932, 1936, and 1940 elections. As Table 7 (page 117) shows, this prediction is accurate. In 1932 and 1936 those women who were old enough to vote (most were not) voted Democratic in about the same proportion as the general public. By 1940, when half the future 6669th voted, they voted for Roosevelt in much greater proportions than the national average. Again, Roosevelt was the champion of Allied

assistance, and it is only logical that women who would soon join the armed forces would support him.

Table 7
Election Comparisons to 1940

	Fifth Army Wacs	Total Population (In appropriate states)
1932-Roosevelt	67%	62%
Hoover	33%	35%
	N=3	N=39,749,382
1936-Roosevelt	67%	66%
Landon	33%	32%
	N=6	N=45,642,303
1940-Roosevelt	85%	59%
Willkie	15%	40%
	N=13	N=49,840,443

*SOURCE: Robert A. Diamond, ed., Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections, (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1975), pp. 289, 290 and 291.

Did these women who so strongly supported Roosevelt have anything else in their background that made them atypical of the general population? The Army was searching for well-educated recruits, and one would expect such women to have come from well-educated families. This is exactly what Tables 8 (page 118) and 9 (page 119) show. Furthermore, they illustrate that having a highly-educated mother was a stronger indicator of a daughter's level of education than having a highly-educated father. The proportion of Wac's mothers with college degrees was nearly triple that of the general population, the proportion of fathers only double.

This particular discrepancy disappears in regard to the occupations of Wacs' parents (see Tables 10, page 119 and 11, page 120). Both

mothers and fathers were four times more likely to be professionals than the comparative general population. Fathers were also twice as likely (when compared to other white males) to be farmers, and somewhat more likely to be craftsmen or operatives. Unskilled labor such as that of domestic servants, farm laborers, and industrial laborers is totally unrepresented among the Wac fathers.

Table 8
Fathers' Education Comparisons

	Fathers of Fifth Army Wacs	Comparative General Population - 1940*
None	0%	6%
1-8	46%	66%
Some High School	15%	9%
High School Diploma	12%	9%
Vocational Post-High School Training	8%	--
Some College	8%	4%
College Degree	4%	3%
Graduate Work	8%	1%
Not Reported	0%	2%
	N=26	N=6,755,777

*SOURCE: 1940 Census of Population, vol. 2, Characteristics of the Population, parts 1, 2 and 3, table 19.

The farming statistic was unexpected, and, again, age may be the explanation. This particular comparison is with white men of all ages. The inclusion of men younger than the Wac fathers would lower the percentage of farmers shown, as young men were more apt to desert the farm during the Depression. When compared with men (black and white) of their own age, the percentage of Wac fathers who were farmers was much closer to that of the general public.

The number of women who were farmers was also unexpected, but the same explanation as that given for the fathers applies here. More

Table 9
Mothers' Education Comparisons

	Mothers of Fifth Army Wacs	Comparative General Population - 1940*
None	0%	5%
1-8	40%	59%
Some High School	8%	13%
High School Diploma	24%	13%
Vocational Post-High School Training	0%	--
Some College	16%	5%
College Degree	12%	3%
Graduate Work	0%	1%
Not Reported	--	1%
	N=25	N=7,723,230

*SOURCE: 1940 Census of Population, vol. 2, Characteristics of the Population, parts 1, 2 and 3, table 19.

Table 10
Fathers' Occupation Comparisons

	Fifth Army Wacs' Fathers	Comparative General Population - 1940 (inc. all ages)**	Comparative General Population - 1940 (inc. blacks)**
Professional	21%	6%	5%
Farmers	18%	9%	15%
Managers	3%	10%	13%
Clerical	3%	14%	11%
Craftsmen	27%	17%	19%
Operatives	18%	20%	15%
Domestic Service	0%	.002%	.004%
Protective Service	0%	2%	2%
Farm Laborer	0%	6%	4%
Laborer	0%	10%	10%
	N=33	N=14,644,805	N=5,555,617

*The women were asked "What was your father's/mother's occupation?" If they gave more than one job, each one was recorded as a separate answer so these statistics include more than twenty-six responses.

**SOURCE: 1940 Census of Population, vol. 3, The Labor Force, parts 2, 3, 4, and 5, table 13.

expected was that 50% of Wac mothers in the paid work force were professionals, but these statistics refer only to women employed outside of the home. Only 32% of Wac mothers were counted among this number. The other 68% were housewives.

Table 11
Mothers' Occupation Comparisons

	Fifth Army Wacs' Mothers	Comparative General Population - 1940 (inc. all ages)*	Comparative General Population - 1940 (inc. blacks)*
Professional	50%	14%	14%
Farmers	10%	1%	2%
Clerical	20%	33%	23%
Domestic			
Service	10%	11%	18%
Service			
Worker	10%	12%	14%
	N=31	N=4,579,555	N=2,137,733

*SOURCE: 1940 Census of Population, vol. 3, The Labor Force, parts 2, 3, 4, and 5, table 13.

One last comparison of interest concerns the nature of where Fifth Army Wacs grew up and the size of their places of residence when they joined the service. Two factors would lead one to expect the women of the 6669th to have come from larger, urban areas than did the general population. First, the smaller and more rural a residence, the more conservative its inhabitants are apt to be. Conservative women were not likely to do something as unusual as enlist in the Army. Second, according to WAC Historian Mattie E. Treadwell, the very structure of WAC recruiting served to reinforce urban origins. When faced with a limited budget, the Army decided to concentrate WAC recruiting efforts in densely populated areas where there was a large pool of women with

the desired job skills. So it is not surprising that Tables 12 and 13 show that Fifth Army Wacs came from large urban areas in slightly greater proportions than the general public.

Table 12
Comparison of Where Wacs were Raised - 1920*

	Fifth Army Wacs	Total Population - 1920**
Rural	35%	45%
Urban	65%	55%
	N=26	N=6,168,561

*In 1920 Fifth Army Wacs ranged in age from 17 down to not having been born yet. By 1930 they would have been 27-6. As the older women would have been fully grown by this time, 1920 statistics were used.

**SOURCE: 1920 Census of the Population, Abstract of the Census - Population, table 15.

Table 13
Residence Comparisons - 1940

	Fifth Army Wacs	Total Population in appropriate states - 1940
Rural	4%	34%
0-10,000	12%	9%
10-25,000	27%	8%
25-100,000	15%	10%
100,000 +	42%	37%
	N=26	N=54,663,329

*SOURCE: 1940 Census of the Population, United States Summary - Divisions and States, table 21.

The urban background of a majority of the 6669th's members was to be expected. So were their high levels of education, secretarial backgrounds, Democratic leanings, well-educated, professional parents, and single status. Fifth Army Wacs' youth, Catholicism and lack of

professional employment were somewhat unexpected, but explicable. Would any of these characteristics, expected or not, carry over into the postwar years?

Postwar. One would anticipate that the independent, adventurous women of the Fifth Army would continue to be atypical. In fact, one might expect that not only would they maintain their social advantages, but they would actually increase them. They would become even better educated and more professional than the average woman. Professional, independent women would also be less apt to be married, have children, or be Catholic. These women would probably be Republicans because of their resulting prosperity and military backgrounds.

As Table 14 (page 123) indicates, by 1980 women who had served in the 6669th were indeed still better educated than the comparative general population. Most significant is the number of ex-Fifth Army Wacs who had done graduate work. Not only did a greater proportion of Wacs reach this level of education than the general population, but the difference between these groups in 1980 is much greater than it was in 1940 (see column 3). Even though easier access to education had caused the general public to gain on the Fifth Army Wacs in every other educational category, the Army women outstripped the public in graduate work.

One explanation for the Wacs' pursuance of academics is the GI Bill. Forty percent of ex-Fifth Army Wacs who did graduate work used GI benefits to pay for their education. For those who did not use the benefits, either the service itself, or something about the type of woman who chose to join the WAC, led them to strive for higher education.

One would expect the ex-Wacs' advances in education to lead to a corresponding surge in professional employment, but this did not

Table 14
Postwar Educational Comparisons

	Fifth Army Wacs 1982	Comparative General Population - 1980*	Change in the Difference Between Wacs & the Nation from 1940 to 1980**
None	0%	1	0
1-8	0%	27	- 8
Some High School	4%	19	- 3
High School Diploma	20%	33	- 9
Vocational Post- High School Training	28%	--	--
Some College	28%	12	- 8
College Degree	0%	5	-13
Graduate Work	8%	3	+18
Graduate Degree	12%	--	--
Not Reported	0%	3	--
	N=25	N=12,361,645	1940's: N=25 N=8,247,314

*SOURCE: 1980 Census of Population, vol. 1, Characteristics of the Population, table 203.

**In this column a negative number indicates that the difference between the Wac percentage and the general population percentage dropped between 1940 and 1980. A positive number indicates that the difference became greater. For example, in 1940 52% of Wacs had high school diplomas compared to 28% of the comparative general population. The Wac advantage in 1940 was +24. In 1980 it was only a +15. The Wacs had lost 9 points of their advantage: a -9. In 1940 0% of Wacs had done graduate work, 1% of the population had. The Wacs had a "-1 advantage." In 1980 they had a +17 advantage. To get from -1 to +17 they had to gain 18% points: a +18.

happen. There were only slight gains in the managerial, service, and professional categories, with corresponding losses in clerical and private household work (see Table 15, page 124). In fact, considering the small sample size, these changes are so small that they become

insignificant, and any conclusions based on them would be purely speculative. The most prominent statistic shown is still the large number of clerical workers

Table 15
Postwar Occupational Comparisons

	Fifth Army Wacs 1982	Comparative General Population*	Change in the Difference Between Wacs & the Nation from 1940 to 1980**
Professional, Technical and Kindred	12%	14%	+ 3
Managers and Administrators	3%	6%	+ 1
Clerical	71%	31%	- 5
Service Workers	14%	14%	+ 3
Private Household	0%	2%	-15***
	N=46	N=28,682,003	1940's: N=34 N=3,861,831

*SOURCE: 1950 Census of Population, Special Reports, tables 6 and 7; 1960 Census of the Population, table 6; 1970 Census of the Population, table 226; 1980 Census of the Population, table 280; The statistics in this column are averages of the 1950, 60, 70 and 1980 census records on white females of the appropriate ages for Wacs in these years. They are nationwide statistics, not averages of the appropriate states.

**See explanation accompanying Table 14, page 123.

***This is a highly inflated statistic. In 1940 only 3% of Fifth Army Wacs were Domestic-Private Household workers, compared to 15% of the population. The could only drop 3%, so 12 of the -15 points shown are the result of a drop in the general population.

in this group of women. In part, this continues to be a reflection of the Army's selection of women with secretarial backgrounds. It is also influenced by the fact that 81% of these women were married at some time during the postwar years (see Table 16, page 125). Clerical work is very responsive to employees who drop in and out of the work force.

While a majority of the members of the 6669th did marry, one would expect a greater proportion of them to remain single than in the general population because of the job training, maturity, and opportunities offered by their war service. Table 16 shows that this is exactly what happened. Ex-Fifth Army Wacs were three times as likely to have remained single as women in the general population. By this time all Wacs were old enough to have married if they were going to (the youngest would be 61), so the youth bias in the sample does not influence this statistic.

Table 16
Postwar Marital Comparisons

	Fifth Army Wacs - 1982	Comparative General Population - 1980*
Single	19%	6%
Married	69%	58%
Widowed	8%	30%
Divorced	4%	6%
	N=26	N=10,737,433

*SOURCE: 1980 Census of the Population, vol. 1, Characteristics of the Population, table 205.

That bias toward younger members may, however, have influenced the statistics on widowed women, which show a 22% difference between the two groups. In Table 16, the numbers on the general population include women from 55 to 79 years of age. The Wacs ranged from 59 to 77 in 1980, but were concentrated in the lower years. The younger the woman, the more likely that her husband would still be living.

Not only would one expect ex-Wacs to be more apt to be single than the average woman, one would also expect them to have fewer children. Women who were offered opportunities as a result of war service would

tend to seek education and outside work rather than remain at home and raise large families. Table 17 indicates that this was just what happened. Most interesting is the 22% difference between childless Wacs and women without children in the general population. One might propose the greater number of single Wacs as an explanation for this figure, but the census count includes unmarried mothers. Even allowing for the high proportion of single Wacs, Table 17 shows the Ex-Wacs having fewer children than average.

Table 17
Children Born Comparisons

	Fifth Army Wacs - 1982	Comparative General Population - 1980*
None	42%	20%
1	13%	17%
2	25%	25%
3	8%	17%
4	4%	9%
5	0%	5%
6	4%	3%
7	4%	4%
	N=26	N=12,361,645

*SOURCE: 1980 Census of the Population, vol. 1, Characteristics of the Population, table 211.

The relatively small number of children born to ex-Fifth Army Wacs is particularly significant considering that before the war there were proportionately as many Catholics in the 6669th as there were in the comparative general population. If one accepts that Catholic culture is generally more paternalistic towards women than Protestant culture, one might expect fewer former members of the 6669th to be Catholic after the war than before because the independence of the war years would encourage them to challenge such paternalism. As Table 18 (page 127)

shows, this is exactly what happened. Fourteen percent of Fifth Army women left the Catholic faith.

Along with this shift from Catholicism one would expect to see a shift from the Democratic to Republican party. One reason to expect this is that whereas before World War II the Democrats were the party of intervention, by the 1970's and 1980's Republicans had become the hawks. It is only logical that ex-servicewomen would be Republicans, or that women who had done something as unusual as join the Army would become Independents (see Table 19, page 128).

Table 18
Postwar Religious Comparisons

	Fifth Army Wacs 1982	Total Population as Reported by Churches - 1980*	Change in the Difference Between Wacs & the Nation from 1940 to 1980**
Protestant	69%	55%	+ 9
Catholic	26%	40%	-14
Atheist	4%	--	+ 4
	N=26	N=53,274,662	1940's: N=26 N=23,867,220

*SOURCE: Bernard Quinn, Hermann Anderson, et. al., Churches and Church Membership in the United States, 1980 (Atlanta, GA: Glenmary Research Center, 1982), p. 10-26.

**See explanation accompanying Table 14, page 123.

While many ex-Fifth Army women eventually became Republicans, in the first two elections after their enlistment most of them still voted for the Democratic candidate, and in much greater proportions than the general public (see Table 20, page 128).

In 1952 and 1956 these ex-servicewomen supported Dwight D. Eisenhower in overwhelming proportions. All four of these votes

Table 19
Postwar Political Comparisons

	Fifth Army Wacs 1982	Total Population*	Change in the Difference Between Wacs & the Nation from 1940 to 1980**
Democrats	50%	45%	-15
Republicans	38%	25%	+18
Independents	11%	27%	- 4
Apolitical	--	3%	--
	N=26	N=15,795	1940's: N=26 N=not given

*This statistic is the average of 1952, 56, 60, 64, 66, 72, 76 and 80. SOURCE: Frank J. Sorauf/Paul Allen Beck, Party Politics in America (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1988), p. 167.

**See explanation accompanying Table 14, page 123.

Table 20
Post-Enlistment Election Comparisons

	Fifth Army Wacs	Total Population*
1944-Roosevelt	81%	57%
Dewey	19%	41%
	N=25	N=47,974,819
1948-Truman	89%	47%
Dewey	11%	42%
	N=23	N=48,692,442
1952-Eisenhower	83%	55%
Stevenson	17%	48%
	N=25	N=61,551,118
1956-Eisenhower	82%	57%
Stevenson	18%	43%
	N=24	N=62,025,376
1960-Kennedy	50%	50%
Nixon	50%	50%
	N=25	N=68,828,960

*SOURCE: Diamond, ed., Congressional Quarterly, pp. 292-296.

indicate support for the candidate most closely identified with the war. It was only in 1960, when the war was no longer an issue, that the ex-Wacs voted in unison with the general public.

After the war members of the 6669th continued to live in large urban areas in greater proportions than average (see Table 21). These women's residences had been more urban than average before the war, and the travel and education which accompanied their military service only increased this difference.

Table 21
Postwar Residence Size Comparison

	Fifth Army Wacs	Total Population in appropriate states
Rural	0%	21%
0-10,000	10%	11%
10-25,000	19%	12%
25-100,000	33%	20%
100-250,000	5%	7%
250 up	33%	23%
Other Urban	--	6%
	N=24	N=113,537,193

*SOURCE: 1980 Census of the Population, vol. 1, Characteristics of Inhabitants, table 7.

Background Effects

Many observations have been made here concerning Fifth Army Wacs as a group, but it should be remembered that not all Fifth Army Wacs were alike. Within the unit were women of varying ages and social backgrounds, who came from different areas of the country. It is to be expected that variations in these characteristics would cause these women to have different experiences while in the Women's Army Corps. To test this theory, information regarding six personal characteristics was

correlated with answers concerning four aspects of these womens' service in the WAC. The sample size was too small to use sophisticated quantitative methods, so interpretations were based on simple comparisons of percentages. The personal characteristics used were:

Age	Religion
Generation in	Political Affiliation
this Country	Region of Country
Education	(where one grew up)

Occupation was not used as a variable because 74% of these women had clerical backgrounds, and the other 26% were spread out among four other categories. The sample size was so small that this meant one would have been trying to explain something on the basis of nothing. The six variables were correlated with the following:

Reasons for Joining the WAC
 Receiving the Bronze Star
 Attitudes Regarding the WAC
 Social Relations

Reasons for Joining the WAC. Respondents were asked to rate seven reasons for joining the WAC as being either very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important. The "very important" and "somewhat important" answers were then consolidated into "important" and the others into "not important." The variables were:

Sense of patriotism, desire to do your part in war effort.
 Death or injury of a loved one or friend in the war.
 Lack of other family member to serve.
 A desire to generally broaden your horizons.
 Attraction of job training and opportunities.
 The opportunity to travel.
 Did you join the WAC with the specific hope of overseas duty?

The answers to the first four of these were so uniform that there was no variation to study. Everyone felt patriotism was an important reason for enlisting, and only a few women listed any of the next three as

being significant to their enlistment decisions. There were, however, variations in the attractiveness of job training, travel, and hope for overseas duty.

Before examining the statistics, one would expect all three of these variables to be most important to younger, less-educated women, whose families had been in this country only a few generations. Such a woman would also likely be a Catholic and a Democrat. And one would predict women from isolated, less-cosmopolitan regions of the country, namely the West and the South, to be more attracted by these factors.

As seen in Tables 22 (this page), 23 and 24 (page 132), age had varying effects on these three reasons for enlistment. At first glance, it would appear that younger women did indeed value job training more than did older Wacs, but these figures are questionable. With a very small sample size, an 11% variation simply is not big enough to allow one to draw justifiable conclusions. The 33% difference revealed in Table 23, however, is large enough for one to state that women under twenty-three felt the opportunity to travel to be a greater inducement to enlist than did women over that age.

Table 22
Job Training by Age

	Important	Not Important
Born before 1910	NA	NA
Born 1910-18	33% (2 of 6)	67% (4 of 6)
Born after 1918	44% (4 of 9)	56% (5 of 9)

Although the differences between each age group in Table 24 (page 132) are relatively small, the direction of increase indicates that as women got older the desire for overseas service grew. This is contrary

to expectations, and perhaps is a result of younger women being less comfortable about leaving their homes quite that far behind.

Table 23
Travel by Age

	<u>Important</u>	<u>Not Important</u>
Born before 1910	NA	NA
Born 1910-18	57% (4 of 7)	43% (3 of 7)
Born after 1918	90% (9 of 10)	10% (1 of 10)

Table 24
Hope for Overseas by Age

	<u>Important</u>	<u>Not Important</u>
Born before 1910	75% (3 of 4)	25% (1 of 4)
Born 1910-18	67% (6 of 9)	33% (3 of 9)
Born after 1918	55% (6 of 11)	45% (5 of 11)

While age did not have a consistent effect on womens' decisions to join up, generation did. They were asked, "Which generation of your family in this country do you consider yourself (i.e., if you yourself immigrated you are 1st generation, if your grandparents immigrated, you are 3rd generation)?" As Tables 25 (this page), 26 and 27 (page 133) show, women who considered themselves third generation or less put more value on job training, travel, and overseas duty than did women from fourth or earlier generation families.

Table 25
Job Training by Generation

	<u>Important</u>	<u>Not Important</u>
Third Generation or less	45% (5 of 11)	55% (6 of 11)
Fourth Generation or more	25% (1 of 4)	75% (3 of 4)

Table 26
Travel by Generation

	<u>Important</u>	<u>Not Important</u>
Third Generation or less	91% (10 of 11)	9% (1 of 11)
Fourth Generation or more	50% (3 of 6)	50% (3 of 6)

Table 27
Hope for Overseas by Generation

	<u>Important</u>	<u>Not Important</u>
Third Generation or less	77% (10 of 13)	23% (3 of 13)
Fourth Generation or more	50% (4 of 8)	50% (4 of 8)

Table 28 indicates that job training was least important to those with the most education. Somewhat surprisingly, women who already had vocational training valued job training the most. Apparently they wanted to further their chosen careers.

Table 28
Job Training by Education

	<u>Important</u>	<u>Not Important</u>
High School Diploma	60% (3 of 5)	40% (2 of 5)
Vocational Post-High School Training	75% (3 of 4)	25% (1 of 4)
Some College	0% (0 of 6)	100% (6 of 6)
College Degree	NA	NA

Women with vocational training also put the most value on opportunities for travel (see Table 29, page 134). One might propose that women who chose vocational training over college did so out of economic necessity, so the opportunities offered by the service were especially attractive to them. This hypothesis in turn would lead to a

prediction that vocationally trained women would hope for overseas duty. This did not happen, as is shown in Table 30. The "youth" variable was a stronger indicator of this item; three of the four vocational women who answered no to this question were born after 1918.

Table 29
Travel by Education

	Important	Not Important
High School Diploma	80% (4 of 5)	20% (1 of 5)
Vocational Post-High School Training	100% (4 of 4)	0% (0 of 4)
Some College	71% (5 of 7)	29% (2 of 7)
College Degree	0% (0 of 1)	100% (1 of 1)

Table 30
Hope for Overseas by Education

	Yes	No	% Born after 1918 Who Answered No
High School Diploma	89% (7 of 8)	13% (1 of 8)	0% (0 of 1)
Vocational Post-High School Training	33% (2 of 6)	67% (4 of 6)	75% (3 of 4)
Some College	71% (5 of 7)	29% (2 of 7)	100% (2 of 2)
College Degree	33% (1 of 3)	67% (2 of 3)	0% (0 of 2)

With certain explicable exceptions, the predictions that younger, less-educated women from recently immigrated families would value these three opportunities were accurate. The expectations that Catholics and Democrats would give great weight to these opportunities were also fulfilled. The difference between Catholics and Protestants were not huge, but they were large enough and consistent enough to allow a justifiable interpretation (see Tables 31, 32 and 33, page 135).

Table 31
Job Training by Religion

	Important	Not Important
Catholic	50% (3 of 6)	50% (3 of 6)
Protestant	33% (3 of 9)	67% (6 of 9)

Table 32
Travel by Religion

	Important	Not Important
Catholic	83% (5 of 6)	17% (1 of 6)
Protestant	73% (8 of 11)	27% (3 of 11)

Table 33
Hope for Overseas by Religion

	Yes	No
Catholic	78% (7 of 9)	22% (2 of 9)
Protestant	56% (9 of 16)	44% (7 of 16)

Tables 34 and 35 (page 136), are also consistent in indicating that Democrats put more emphasis on the importance of job training and travel opportunities. Hope for overseas duty proves once again to be an exception, and age is once again the reason why (see Table 36, page 136). While Democrats did not hope to go abroad in any greater numbers than any other group, it turns out that five of the six Democrats who answered no to this question were born after 1918.

The last variable proposed as having influenced these motivations for enlistment was the region of the country where these women grew up. They were asked: "Give the name of your home state." The Fifth Army Wacs considered fourteen states to be home, and for purposes of correlation they were grouped into four regions as follows: the South,

Table 34
Job Training by Political Affiliation

	Important	Not Important
Democrats	56% (5 of 9)	44% (4 of 9)
Republicans	0% (0 of 5)	100% (5 of 5)
Independents	100% (1 of 1)	0% (0 of 1)

Table 35
Travel by Political Affiliation

	Important	Not Important
Democrats	90% (9 of 10)	10% (1 of 10)
Republicans	50% (3 of 6)	50% (3 of 10)
Independents	100% (1 of 1)	0% (0 of 1)

including Alabama, Kentucky, and Louisiana; the West with Idaho, Nevada, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas, and Washington; the Midwest, including Ohio and Wisconsin; and the Northeast, made up of New Hampshire, New York, and Pennsylvania.

Table 36
Hope for Overseas by Political Affiliation

	Yes	No	% Born after 1918 Who Answered No
Democrats	60% (9 of 15)	40% (6 of 15)	83% (5 of 6)
Republicans	63% (5 of 8)	38% (3 of 8)	0% (0 of 3)
Independents	100% (2 of 2)	0% (0 of 2)	--

It was anticipated that women from the South and West, where they probably grew up in more isolated, less-cosmopolitan settings would be most attracted by the service's opportunities. As can be seen in Tables 37, 38 (page 137) and 39 (page 138), however, the only region whose women seemed to differ significantly from the rest was the Northeast.

As expected, job training held little importance for these northeastern women, probably because job opportunities were more plentiful in that region of the country than in the others. Greater opportunities for higher education in the Northeast may have been an additional explanation for this statistic. Table 28 (page 133) has shown that 100% of women with college experience also rated job training as unimportant, but of these three northeastern women, only one had attended college. Northeastern women also answered in unison that the opportunity for travel was an important factor in their decision to enlist (see Table 38).

Table 37
Job Training by Region

	Important	Not Important	% Who Marked Not Important Who Had College Experience
South	50% (1 of 2)	50% (1 of 2)	100% (1 of 1)
West	33% (1 of 3)	67% (2 of 3)	100% (2 of 2)
Midwest	57% (4 of 7)	43% (3 of 7)	67% (2 of 3)
Northeast	0% (0 of 3)	100% (3 of 3)	33% (1 of 3)

Table 38
Travel by Region

	Important	Not Important	% of People Who Answered Not Important Who Were Third Generation or Less
South	67% (2 of 3)	33% (1 of 3)	0% (0 of 2)
West	75% (3 of 4)	25% (1 of 4)	67% (2 of 3)
Midwest	71% (5 of 7)	28% (2 of 7)	60% (3 of 5)
Northeast	100% (3 of 3)	0% (0 of 3)	100% (3 of 3)

This was not expected, and it appears that generation (all these women

Table 39
Hope for Overseas by Region

	Yes	No
South	50% (2 of 4)	50% (2 of 4)
West	75% (6 of 8)	25% (2 of 8)
Midwest	57% (4 of 7)	43% (3 of 7)
Northeast	67% (4 of 6)	33% (2 of 6)

were third generation or less) had a greater influence than region. The statistics on hopes for overseas duty are fairly uniform (see Table 39). Other variations reflected in correlations by region exist mainly because of the influence of education or generation. Thus, it appears that region did not have a significant effect on womens' reasons for joining the WAC.

Receiving the Bronze Star. During World War II the Bronze Star was one of the highest awards a Women's Army Corps member could receive. It was given for outstanding service in support of combat operations. Only 2.5% of the 22,500 women who served overseas received this medal. Twenty-seven Fifth Army Wacs, or 37% of the platoon, were so honored.

The ultimate decision to award such a medal lay with male army officers. How the six aforementioned personal characteristics affected a women's chances of receiving a Bronze Star depended therefore on how their male superiors reacted to these traits. There are two theories about this. The first is based on the realization that the Army is a hierarchical, male-dominated institution. It states that a woman who was accustomed to living and working under the direction of male authority figures prior to enlistment would achieve the greatest success in the service. The second theory states that men would react most favorably to a woman who exhibited one-the-job characteristics most

valued by white male society: assertiveness, independence, and initiative.

Predictions based on the first theory suggest that Catholics, and therefore Democrats, would receive Bronze Stars in greater proportions than women of other religious or political persuasions. Women from the South and Midwest should also have received medals more often. Those regions of the country are more conservative than the Northeast, and they lack the Western tradition of strong, independent women. Less-educated, younger women from recently immigrated families would also be less assertive and therefore more acceptable to the male hierarchy.

Acceptance of the second theory would lead one to expect exactly opposite results. Highly-educated Protestants from the West and Northeast who were Republicans or Independents, older than average, and whose families had been in this country four generations or more should have had the most success. As it turns out, the results of this survey give a mixed message.

The statistics on education support the first theory. Less well-educated women received Bronze Stars in greater proportions than women with college degrees (see Table 40). Women with vocational training received the greatest proportion of medals, perhaps because they were the most skilled in secretarial work.

Table 40
Education by Bronze Stars

	Received	Not Received
High School Diploma	43% (3 of 7)	57% (4 of 7)
Vocational Post-High School Training	75% (3 of 4)	25% (1 of 4)
Some College	38% (3 of 8)	63% (5 of 8)
College Degree	0% (0 of 3)	100% (3 of 3)

At first glance, Table 41 appears to support the second theory that independent, assertive women fared best in the WAC. There is a full 50% difference in favor of Protestants. The respect for authority assumed inherent in Catholic culture did nothing to impress these women's male superiors. There is, however, another way to interpret these numbers. The average Catholic woman who would not challenge tradition or authority would never join the WAC to begin with. Therefore, Catholic women who did enlist would be particularly independent and even more apt to challenge authority than the average Protestant. This interpretation again favors the more deferential, and in this case Protestant, woman.

Table 41
Religion by Bronze Stars

	Received	Not Received
Catholics	0% (0 of 7)	100% (7 of 7)
Protestants	50% (8 of 16)	50% (8 of 16)

A straightforward reading of Table 42 (page 141), however, returns one to the theory that independent women did best. Western women received the greatest number of medals. The Northeastern failure to win any is explained by the fact that four of these five women were presumably deferential Catholics. Of course, if one assumes that Catholic women who joined the service were actually very assertive, this table continues to present a mixed message.

An examination of politics (Table 43, page 141), age (Table 44, page 141), and generations (Table 45, page 141), does not do much to clarify this picture. The advantages held by Independents and older women allow one to speculate that assertiveness may indeed have been a key factor,

but the numbers are too small to allow anything but pure speculation. Likewise, the differences revealed in Table 45 are so relatively small as to be insignificant.

Table 42
Region by Bronze Stars

	Received	Not Received	% of Women Who % of Women Who Did Not Receive Bronze Stars Who were Catholics
South	25% (1 of 4)	75% (3 of 4)	33% (1 of 3)
West	71% (5 of 7)	29% (2 of 7)	0% (0 of 2)
Midwest	43% (3 of 7)	57% (4 of 7)	50% (2 of 4)
Northeast	0% (0 of 5)	100% (5 of 5)	80% (4 of 5)

Table 43
Politics by Bronze Stars

	Received	Not Received
Democrats	33% (5 of 15)	67% (10 of 15)
Republicans	33% (2 of 6)	67% (4 of 6)
Independents	100% (2 of 2)	0% (0 of 2)

Table 44
Bronze Stars by Age

	Received	Not Received
Born Before 1910	67% (2 of 3)	33% (1 of 3)
Born 1910-18	25% (2 of 8)	75% (3 of 4)
Born After 1918	45% (5 of 11)	55% (6 of 11)

Table 45
Generation by Bronze Stars

	Received	Not Received
Third Generation or Less	38% (5 of 13)	62% (8 of 13)
Fourth Generation or More	50% (4 of 8)	50% (4 of 13)

These six sets of statistics offer no clear picture. The most likely explanation for this is that additional, unidentified variables affected the awarding of Bronze Stars. Fifth Army Women worked in two echelons, and perhaps the duties assigned to one echelon were more conducive to Bronze Star performance than those assigned to another. Another possibility is that the personal attitudes of the female officer who made initial recommendations for such awards had a great effect on these statistics. In any case, further research would be needed before any conclusive opinions about this could be formed.

Attitudes Regarding the WAC. Respondents were asked to rate themselves as being either very satisfied with, satisfied with, or disappointed in, seven aspects of WAC life. For the following correlations, the "very satisfied with" and "satisfied with" answers were grouped into one category. The features of service life examined were:

- The WAC Uniform
- The Awarding of Rank and Rates of Promotion
- Jobs (Utilization of skills)
- Leadership of Woman Officers
- Food
- Housing
- Dating Regulations

Answers concerning all but one of these variables were so consistently positive that there was no significant variation to be studied.

These results certainly indicate that the twenty-six Fifth Army Wacs who responded to the survey were satisfied with Army life. One cannot, however, state that therefore the entire platoon was happy with the service. As mentioned before, the survey respondents represent a group of friends who kept in contact with each other for nearly forty years,

and they probably had common, positive service experiences. It is assumed that their answers to these questions are positively biased.

Answers concerning the awarding of rank and rates of promotion did exhibit meaningful variations. Logic would suggest that the more mature, assertive woman from a privileged background would be the least accepting of low ranks and slow promotions. This would mean that older, Republican women with more education, coming from families that had been in America for four or more generations, and who were Protestants, would be least satisfied with this aspect of WAC life. Liberal, independent women from the Northeast and West would also be less accepting of low ranks.

As is shown in Table 46, only the predictions on age and politics were fulfilled. Sixty-seven percent (2 of 3) of women born before 1910 were disappointed with their ranks, compared to 28% (6 of 21) of women born after 1909. Also, 50% (4 of 8) of Republican women were unhappy with rank, versus 20% (3 of 15) of Democrats.

Table 46
Predictions on Rank Versus Actual Results

	Predictions of those who would be least satisfied	Actual Results indicating who was least satisfied
Age	Older	Older
Politics	Republican	Republican
Education	Better-educated	Less-educated
Generation	Fourth Generation or more	Third Generation or less
Religion	Protestant	Even
Region	Northeast and West	Even

Two other predictions, those on education and generation, were proven wrong. Contrary to expectations, it was the less-educated woman

from a recently immigrated family who was dissatisfied with promotions in the Fifth Army. Thirty-eight percent (3 of 8) of women with only high school diplomas were unhappy with the situation, versus 6% (1 of 17) of those with more education. Forty-three percent (6 of 14) of women whose families had been here three generations or less were unhappy, versus 13% (1 of 8) of those who had been here longer.

The variables of Religion and Region produced no significant variations and therefore do nothing to clarify these mixed results. The two accurate predictions about age and political affiliation are certainly not enough to validate the theory that older women from more advantage backgrounds would expect greater rewards for their work, and therefore be more disappointed by low rank and slow promotions. Perhaps these very women were also the more mature, and better able to handle the realities of military life than young, less-experienced Wacs.

Social Attitudes. Respondents were given six questions regarding their social attitudes before, during, and after the war (see Appendix B, page 156). Unfortunately, not enough women answered the three questions on premarital and extramarital sex, or the two on lesbianism, for statistical correlations to be made. Most did, however, answer the questions on sexual pressure and on changes in their social attitudes. Those answers will be correlated with the six personal characteristics being examined in this section.

The question on sexual pressure read: "To what degree did you experience sexual pressure (unwanted attempts to convince you to engage in some type of physical relationship) from allied servicemen (including Americans)?" The possible answers were much pressure, some pressure, or

none at all. For purposes of correlation, answers to "much pressure" and "some pressure" have been combined.

Men are not likely to make sexual advances toward women they think will reject them. This assumption gives a clue as to which Fifth Army women would experience the most pressure. On the average, members of the 6669th were older and better educated than the men they worked with. One would therefore expect the unit's younger, less-educated women to receive the most attention, as men would be more confident of success with women closer to them in age and education.

Servicemen probably would know a woman's approximate age and educational background, but not necessarily her political affiliation, religion, or how many generations her family had been in this country. Nevertheless, these characteristics may still have had an affect on which women would be harassed. A Protestant, Republican woman from a founding family is apt to have a different personality profile than a Catholic Democrat whose parents immigrated to this country. Servicemen would react differently to these two women, even if they did now know why.⁴

The same hope for success that would lead men to pressure young, comparatively less-educated Wacs would also lead them to pressure Protestant (and therefore Republican) women. Catholic (and therefore Democratic) women are apt to have presented a more socially conservative demeanor which would have discouraged such advances. Finally, Northeastern and Western women were probably less conservative than Southern and Midwestern Wacs, and therefore more likely to be pressured.

As Table 47 (page 146) indicates, three of these predictions were accurate. As originally predicted, men were attracted to women of like

education. One hundred percent (4 of 4) of women who had high school diplomas were sexually pressured, compared to 45% (5 of 11) of those with more education. Republicans also received more pressure than did Democrats (80%, or 4 of 5; to 44%, or 4 of 9), as did women from the West and Northeast as compared to those from the South and Midwest (86%, or 6 of 7; to 36%, or 3 of 8).

Table 47
Predictions on Sexual Pressures Versus Actual Results

	Predictions of those most likely to be pressured	Results showing those who actually were most pressured
Education	Less-educated	Less-educated
Politics	Republican	Republican
Region	West and Northeast	West and Northeast
Age	Younger	Older
Generation	Fourth Generation or more	Third Generation or less
Religion	Protestant	Even

The prediction that men would pressure younger Fifth Army Wacs because they would be closer to them in age was wrong. Only 43% (3 of 7) of women under twenty-four were pressured, compared to 71% (5 of 7) of those women twenty-four years old or older. Perhaps men felt they would be more successful with older, "more experienced" women, or perhaps they felt protective towards the younger ones.

The initial assumption that women whose families had been here four generations or more would receive the most pressure was also faulty. Only 43% (3 of 7) of those women were pressured, versus 83% (5 of 6) of those from families who had been here three generations or less. Further investigation reveals that this set of statistics was greatly influenced by another variable, education. All third generation or less

women who experienced sexual pressure had no more than high school educations. Variations caused by the sixth and final variable, religion, were so slight as to be insignificant.

As predicted, women who were less-educated, Republican, and/or from the West or Northeast were more apt to be sexually pressured. That older women were more pressure was unexpected, as was the pressuring of women from families that had been here three generations or less. This last statistic read as it did, however, because these same women had no more than high school educations.

Social pressure to engage in premarital or extramarital sex or sexual foreplay did exist in the Fifth Army. In this highly-charged atmosphere of war and service overseas, one would expect most women to become more liberal in their attitudes toward such social relations.

In order to test this theory, Fifth Army Wacs were asked:

How would you say your experience in the WAC affected your attitudes toward what constituted proper social relationships between men and women? For example, a woman who before the WAC wouldn't even casually kiss a man might afterward feel at ease doing so; someone else may have become involved in their first love affair. Either woman would probably have become more liberal in her attitudes. I simply want your opinion on how your feelings changed.

The women were given the choice of one of the following answers: became much more liberal, became somewhat more liberal, remained the same, or became more conservative. For the purposes of correlation answers of "became much more liberal" or "became somewhat more liberal" were consolidated into one category.

If one assumes that the service was a liberating experience, one would predict that the women most apt to become more liberal would be those who were more socially conservative or sheltered before the war.

That would include younger, less-educated women from families who had been here three generations or less. These women would probably be Catholics or Democrats. Women from the South and Midwest would also be more conservative.

As Table 48 indicates, four of these six predictions were accurate. It must be noted, however, that the number of respondents to this question was so small that when their answers were spread out among the three answer choices, the results became purely speculative. Still, the trend indicated by the four positive predictions does support the theory that women who changed the most were those who were the most socially conservative prior to their military service.

Table 48
Predictions of Social Change Versus Actual Results

	Predictions of those who would become more liberal	Results showing those who actually did become more liberal
Age	Younger	Younger
Education	Less-educated	Less-educated
Generation	Third Generation or less	Third Generation or less
Politics	Democrats	Democrats
Religion	Catholics	Protestants
Region	South and Midwest	Westerners

The only truly significant finding to contradict that supposition regarded Region. Seventy-five percent (3 of 4) of Western women became more liberal, versus 33% (2 of 6) of Midwesterners and 0% (0 of 2 and 0 of 3) of Southerners and Northeasterners. These findings explain the only other contradiction to the original theory. Contrary to expectations, it was found that Protestants became more liberal in greater percentages than Catholics, 36%, (4 of 11) to 25% (1 of 4).

However, three of those four Protestants were also Westerners.

Table 49 (page 150) summarizes the effect of background on various aspects of Wac service life. A woman's level of education and the number of generations her family had been in this country were the most consistent indicators of how she experienced the WAC. An examination of those two characteristics leads one to surmise that the greater a woman's desire for training, travel, and overseas duty, the more apt she was both to receive a Bronze Star and to be dissatisfied with low rank. She was also more apt to be sexually pressured and to become more socially liberal. Perhaps a woman who was very eager to do well tried particularly hard to please her male co-workers and superiors. Such eagerness could have been misinterpreted as sexual invitation and led men to pressure these Wacs. Consistent pressure could have led even the most conservative woman to become more liberal.

A connection between a strong desire for service opportunities and the other four aspects of military life examined in this section would explain some unexpected results. For example, it was predicted that Protestants would be less satisfied with low rank and more likely to suffer sexual pressure than Catholics. The actual statistics indicated that Catholics and Protestants were dissatisfied and pressured in nearly equal proportions. Further investigation reveals that Catholics exhibited a greater desire for service opportunities. This probably weighted the results concerning rank and sexual pressure. The same explanation applies to age.

These women's varying social backgrounds did affect their service experiences, but the differences between these women were much less striking than the similarities. The Fifth Army Wacs were a very select

Table 49
Summary of the Effects of Background on Various Aspects of Wac Service Life

	Greater Desire for Job Training	Greater Desire for Travel	Greater Desire for Overseas Duty	More Apt to have received Bronze Stars	Apt to have been dis- satisfied with rank & promotion	More apt to have been sexually pressured	More apt to have become more socially liberal
Age	Even*	Younger	Older*	Even	Older	Older*	Younger
Education	Less-educated & vocationally trained	Vocationally trained*	Less-educated	Less-educated & vocationally trained	Less- educated*	Less-educated	Less-educated
Generation	Third Generation or less	Third Generation or less	Third Generation or less	Even	Third Generation or less*	Third Generation or less* (influenced by education)	Third Generation or less
Religion	Catholic	Catholic	Catholic	Protestant	Even*	Even*	Protestant* (influenced by region)
Politics	Democrat	Democrat	Even* (influenced by age)	Even	Republican	Republican	Democrat
Region	Even*	Northeast* (influenced by generation)	Even*	Western	Even*	Western and Northeastern	Western* 150

*This indicates a result that was contrary to initial predictions.

group of highly-educated, highly-skilled women who chose to serve their country in its time of need. As they performed that service they soon found that they were facing not one, but two pervasive enemies: fascism and sexism. Their experience with sexism reveals much about women's movement into male-dominated activities.

Women were allowed to be full members of the American military only under extreme stress as a result of World War II. WAC legislation passed only after the Army and the Congress were convinced that there was an overwhelming practical need for women to be a formal part of the war effort. Ideological arguments that women simply deserved the right to serve had little impact. In fact, ideology was used most persuasively as an argument against female participation. Even most of those who supported the WAC saw it as a temporary, emergency measure. Its postwar survival was unexpected. Women's final acceptance into the military was a fait accompli, rather than the end result of some well-organized social revolution.

Once in the military, women felt under constant pressure to justify their presence. Some of this pressure was self-imposed, and some of it was applied by their fellow soldiers and the public at large. When they received overseas inoculations they were careful not to faint, even though many of the men did. The press stressed that each woman was doing not just the job of one man, but that of one-and-a-half or two men. For these women simply doing the job of one individual and going about one's private, individual business was not enough. Everything they did was scrutinized by a curious and sometimes hostile public. The actions of a few women would often be used to smear the reputation of the entire group. And women were held to much higher standards than

their male counterparts.

This double standard was especially harsh when it came to sexual matters. The mere hint that Wacs might be issued prophylactics caused a major scandal, even though it was common knowledge that such items were routinely issued to male personnel. The realization that some Wacs were sexually active caused the whole Corps to be labeled as "loose women"; this at a time when it was good-heartedly assumed that male soldiers "would be boys" and sow their wild oats. Male soldiers would lavish attention on Wacs, and some would pressure them sexually. Some men would then turn around and crucify women for giving in, or insult them for being loose women when in reality their advances had been rebuffed.

Such hostility bewildered and hurt these women, but most did not give up. Most responded to such obstacles by working even harder. People who actually served with the Wacs came to appreciate their contributions to the war effort, and many became strong supporters of the Corps. This acceptance and appreciation was the key to Wac morale. These women could deal with public hostility as long as they felt their efforts were valued by their fellow soldiers.

Ex-Fifth Army Wacs still recall and resent the hostility they encountered, but they also recall the deep personal satisfaction and growth they experienced as a result of their service to their country. That service, rather than a desire to make some kind of feminist statement, was their primary reason for joining the WAC. Most of these women did not, and still do not, consider themselves feminists. Nevertheless, they and their fellow servicewomen did further women's rights. During World War II women became formal members of the American military, and today they are an integral part of this nation's defense

force. The nation owes the 6669th a debt of gratitude for its wartime efforts, and today's servicewomen owe them thanks for helping to open the door to a male-dominated profession. The Fifth Army Wacs truly were path breakers in the modern military.

FOOTNOTES

¹There is a possibility that the nonrespondents to this survey may differ significantly from those who returned the questionnaire. In such a case of nonprobability sampling it is absolutely essential to bear in mind that serious biases may exist. In fact, a high rate of response may actually increase the likelihood of such bias. Results can nevertheless be very useful and thought provoking, but must be seen as hypothetical and considered generalizations rather than concrete conclusions. When using nonprobability sampling it is not appropriate to test for significance.

²Statistics on women who would be 21-39, rather than 21-45, were used because none of the Fifth Army Wacs were over 39 in 1942; U.S. Congress, House, debate on H.R. 6293, 77th Congr., 2nd sess., 17 March 1942, Congressional Record 88:2598; Mattie E. Treadwell, The Women's Army Corps (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Department of the Army, 1954), pp. 168-190, 231-255.

³These regulations were the ones in effect at the time all but three or four of the Fifth Army Wacs enlisted. They would later be relaxed; U.S. Congress, House, 77th Congr., 2nd sess., 17 March 1942, Congressional Record 88:2598-2600; Treadwell, The Women's Army Corps, p. 19 and 578.

⁴Interpretations regarding independents assume that politically-minded people who choose to be Independents are nontraditionalists. A traditional person who wished to be involved in politics would join a party.

⁵These statements are generalizations. They do not mean that all Protestant, Republican women from founding families will all have exactly the same personality profiles. They do mean that if one knows these facts about a woman the odds of being right if one guesses, for example, that she is self-possessed and well-educated, are better than even.

APPENDIX A

List of Platoon Members

*Lucy Amber	Dottie Kengle
*Andy Anderson	*Mary A. Kosierowski
*Bertha Audet	Mae Lavsa
Inez Baxter	*Louise Lebert
*Marion Beloit	Julia LeFever
Bertha A. Benninghoff	Mary Malloy
Nedra Bowman	Eleanor F. McCaskill
Louise Bradley	Effie L. McGowan
Eugenia A. Burn	*Genevieve C. Mendenhall
Betty Bush	*Thelma Mersch
*Miriam L. Butler	Dorothy A. Millard
*Marjory G. Byram	Nellie F. Mullvain
Marjory Cadman	*Mary M. Murphy
Helen Carlson	Mildred Nibert
Dorothy C. Carpenter	Marguerite O'Laughlin
Helene D. Cordes	Jackie Oliver
Marcelle Crawford	*Eunice H. Onsrud
Stella Dera	*Norma Reick
*Dottie Dittwald	Katherine Richter
Katherine Egner	Mary Robertson
Cora M. Foster	Doris Rogers
Jean M. Fuller	Sandy Sanderlin
Kathryn B. Garrett	Mable L. Sherwood
Nellie Garrett	*Mona Skaug
Ethel Gicker	Marion Sletzwiski
Annalane M. Groenink	*Muriel Sneed
Lillian Greenstein	*Elenor Spinola
Ruby P. Hale	Josephine Starnes
Caroline Hartman	Rose E. St. Clair
Frances S. Henderson	*Margaret Stringfellow
*Betty Hennessy	Florence N. Terry
Rena B. Hicks	Vivian B. Watson
*Eileen V. Higgins	Mary A. Wellman
*Betty E. Hoeffler	Lucille Wernoski
Geraldine Horne	Mae West
Roxanne Houston	*Mertice White
*Laura O. Howieson	Marion Wilderman
Lee Irwin	Jessie Windes
*Daisy Jessup	*Hannah Worton
*Johnny Johnson	Thelma Wright
Zenaida Johnson	Eugenia B. Zintek
Jeanne G. Joyal	

*Those who participated in survey

APPENDIX B

THE 6669th WAC PLATOON

Finally, yes, here it is, the questionnaire. Obviously, it is longer than I had anticipated. There are so many things about the WAC I want to understand, I couldn't shorten it anymore. Please find it in your heart to fill the whole thing out. As I've said before I am very excited about telling your story, but I cannot do it without your help. Thanks for your time and thought.

A few comments. One, I ask for a lot of dates and details. You probably can't remember all of them. I understand. Just do your best, and when you can't remember something, just leave it blank. Secondly, throughout the questionnaire I use the term WAC, although at times you were still the WAAC. This is just for simplicity's sake, and in the actual thesis I will make the proper distinctions. Thirdly, I call the 6669th the 6669th throughout, although at first you were designated the 182nd. Again, I will make the proper distinctions in the thesis.

There are four parts to this questionnaire. Sections 1-3 and 6 deal with details of your life before and after you were in the WAC. This is so I can see whether certain types of women (i.e. highly-educated women, women from big families, or whose parents were immigrants) joined the WAC; and also to see if your lives after the WAC were different from other women's lives (i.e. did former Wacs have smaller families). Sections 4 and 5 deal with your life while you were in the WAC. This is so I can tell the story of the 6669th. Section 7 is a commentary sheet where you can tell me any interesting personal stories, feelings or thoughts you have about your time in the WAC.

Again, thanks for your time. Do fill this out as soon as reasonably possible, I do appreciate your effort. If necessary, fill-out the formal questionnaire first, mail it to me, then fill-out the general commentary sheet at your leisure. You can mail it later on. I need the questionnaire itself as soon as possible due to the requirements of one of my classes that ends in late April. I hope you will have fun filling this out--sort of like reliving a part of your life! So enjoy.

WOMEN OF THE 6669thI. Section One: Identification

1. Name--Last _____
First _____
Middle _____
Maiden _____
2. Birth date--Month_____, Day _____, Year _____
3. Death date--Month_____, Day _____, Year _____
(A few deceased women's husbands are filling this out for me, obviously if you are filling this out yourself, leave this question blank.)
4. Race: _____Caucasian
_____Black
_____Oriental
_____American Indian
5. List what you consider the two major components of your ethnic background (i.e. English and German, French and Czech, etc.)
 1. _____
 2. _____
6. Which generation of your family in this country do you consider yourself (i.e. if you yourself immigrated you are 1st generation, if your grandparents immigrated, you are 3rd generation)?
7. Give the name of your hometown _____
home state _____
8. Were you raised on a farm or other rural area? _____Yes
_____No

II. Section Two: Family Information

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1. What year was your Father born?
2. What year did he die?
3. Please mark the highest level of education your Father received:

<input type="checkbox"/> none	<input type="checkbox"/> some college
<input type="checkbox"/> 8th grade or less	<input type="checkbox"/> college graduate
<input type="checkbox"/> some high school	<input type="checkbox"/> graduate work
<input type="checkbox"/> high school graduate	<input type="checkbox"/> graduate degree
<input type="checkbox"/> vocational or post-high school training	

4. What was your Father's occupation?
5. What year was your Mother born in?
6. What year did she die?
7. Using the categories in question three, what was the highest level of education your Mother received?
8. What was your Mother's occupation?
9. How many older brothers do you have? _____
Younger brothers? _____
Older sisters? _____
Younger sisters? _____

III. Section Three: Personal Information Before WAC

(Questions in this section refer to your life up until the end of 1942.)

1. What Religion did you consider yourself?
2. What was the highest level of education you had received?

<input type="checkbox"/> high school graduate	<input type="checkbox"/> graduate work
<input type="checkbox"/> some college	<input type="checkbox"/> graduate degree
<input type="checkbox"/> college graduate	<input type="checkbox"/> vocational or post-high school training
3. What was your occupation before joining the WAC?

4. How would you have designated yourself politically?

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☐ Democrat
☐ Republican
☐ other (please specify _____)

5. Who did you vote for in the 1932 presidential elections?

☐ Roosevelt ☐ were not eligible to vote
☐ Hoover ☐ eligible, did not vote
☐ other (please specify _____) ☐ cannot remember

6. Who did you vote for in the 1936 election?

☐ Roosevelt ☐ were not eligible to vote
☐ Landon ☐ eligible, did not vote
☐ other (please specify _____) ☐ cannot remember

7. Who did you vote for in 1940?

☐ Roosevelt ☐ were not eligible to vote
☐ Willkie ☐ eligible, did not vote
☐ other (please specify _____) ☐ cannot remember

8. List any organizations in which you were active (i.e. Eastern Star, a sorority, the League of Women Voters, the Red Cross, Chamber of Commerce, Lady's Church guilds, theater groups, dance groups, etc.)

9. Where did you live when you joined the WAC? Town _____
State _____

10. Were you living on a farm or other rural area? ☐ Yes
☐ No

11. What was your marital status when you joined?

☐ single ☐ divorced
☐ married ☐ widowed

12. If married, in what year were you married? If married more than once, list all marriage years. (Only through 1942)

13. If divorced, what year were you divorced?

14. If widowed, what year did your husband die?

15. As of the end of 1942, how many children did you have?

16. List the years of their births: 1. _____ 4. _____
2. _____ 5. _____
3. _____ 6. _____

IV. Section Four: Service with the 6669th Platoon

1. What month and year did you join the WAC? Month_____
- Year_____
2. Following is a list of reasons why you might have joined the WAC. Please rate them according to the following scale:
- 1.-very important
2.-somewhat important
3.-not very important
4.-not at all important
- ____sense of patriotism, desire to do your part in war effort
- ____death or injury of a loved one or friend in the war
- ____lack of other family member to serve
- ____attraction of job training and opportunity
- ____the opportunity for travel
- ____a desire to generally broaden your horizons
3. Where did you receive your basic training?
- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| ____Fort Des Moines, Ia. | ____Camp Monticello, Ark. |
| ____Daytona Beach, Fla. | ____Camp Polk, La. |
| ____Fort Oglethorpe, Ga. | ____Camp Ruston, La. |
| ____Fort Devens, Mass. | |
4. Did you join the WAC with the specific hope of overseas duty?
5. What month and year did you join the 6669th? Month_____
- Year_____
6. What was your rank when you joined the 6669th?
- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| ____First Officer | ____Technician, Third Grade |
| ____Second Officer | ____Leader |
| ____Third Officer | ____Technician, Fourth Grade |
| ____Chief Leader | ____Junior Leader |
| ____First Leader | ____Technician, Fifth Grade |
| ____Technical Leader | ____Auxiliary First Class |
| ____Staff Leader | ____Auxiliary |
7. Were you promoted while in the 6669th: If so list rank you were promoted to an month and year of promotion.
- | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1.-Rank_____ | 2.-Rank_____ | 3.-Rank_____ |
| month_____ | month_____ | month_____ |
| year_____ | year_____ | year_____ |

8. What job(s) did you hold while with the 6669th? Place a 1 by the first job you held, a 2 by the second, etc.

____ telephone operator	____ company clerk
____ clerk	____ mess sergeant
____ typist	____ cooks helper
____ stenographer	____ utility repairwoman
____ administration clerk	____ other (specify _____)

9. Were you in the forward or rear echelon?

10. Did you receive any individual awards or medals?

11. Were you sent on rotation while with the 6669th? If so please indicate:

Month left _____	Month returned _____
Year left _____	Year returned _____

12. Were you sent on temporary duty while you were with the 6669th? If so please indicate:

Month left _____	Month returned _____
Year left _____	Year returned _____

13. Were you given a major leave or rest and recreation while in the 6669th?

14. If so please indicate where (Algiers, Capri, Rome, Riviera, Venice, Switzerland or Jerusalem) and when.

1. Place _____	2. Place _____	3. Place _____
month _____	month _____	month _____
year _____	year _____	year _____

15. What was the reason for your final departure from the 6669th?

____ transfer
____ discharge

16. Please list month and year you left the 6669th for good. Month _____
Year _____

17. Please list the month and year you were discharged from the WAC.

Month _____
Year _____

18. Reason for final discharge from WAC.

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____medical
____personal hardship
____demobilization
____other (please specify_____)

V. Section Five: WAC Attitudes

1. Please rate your feelings about the following aspects of life in the WAC. Use this scale:

1.-very satisfied
2.-satisfied with
3.-disappointed in

____WAC uniform
____the awarding of rank and rates of promotion
____jobs you held (i.e. utilization of your skills)
____leadership of women officers
____food
____housing
____dating regulations

2. How would you evaluate your relations with the following groups of people? Use this scale:

1.-very good
2.-good
3.-neutral
4.-bad
5.-doesn't apply

____British Auxilary Territorial Service women
____French Servicewomen
____Red Cross women
____United Service Organization members
____North Africans
____Italians
____Nurses

3. Please judge the attitudes of the men you served with on the following scale:

- 1.-supportive
- 2.-condescending (paternalistic)
- 3.-had an attitude of sexual harassment
- 4.-neutral
- 5.-were critical of your presence

____top rank men officers (i.e. Eisenhower, Clark)
 ____men officers you were in everyday contact with
 ____enlisted men

4. Please rate the reactions of the following people to your joining and serving in the WAC. Use the following scale:

- 1.-supportive
- 2.-neutral
- 3.-critical

____husband or boyfriend
 ____Father
 ____Mother
 ____friends
 ____brothers
 ____sisters

VI. Section Six: Personal Information After the WAC

(Questions in this section refer to your life starting in January 1943.)

1. What Religion do you consider yourself?
2. What is the highest level of education you received after 1943?
 (If it remains the same as before indicate that level.)

____high school graduate	____graduate work
____some college	____graduate degree
____college graduate	____vocational or post-high school training
3. Did you use the GI Bill to pay for any of your education?
4. What other veteran's benefits have you made use of?

5. What has your occupation been since the end of the war?

6. Where have you lived the majority of the time since the war?

Town_____

State_____

7. How do you designate yourself politically?

_____Democrat
_____Republican
_____other (please specify_____)

8. Who did you vote for in the 1944 presidential elections?

_____Roosevelt	_____were not eligible to vote
_____Dewey	_____eligible, did not vote
_____other (specify_____)	_____cannot remember

9. Who did you vote for in the 1948 elections?

_____Truman	_____were not eligible to vote
_____Dewey	_____were eligible, did not vote
_____other (specify_____)	_____cannot remember

10. Who did you vote for in 1952?

_____Stevenson	_____were not eligible to vote
_____Eisenhower	_____eligible, did not vote
_____other (specify_____)	_____cannot remember

11. Who did you vote for in 1956?

_____Stevenson	_____were not eligible to vote
_____Eisenhower	_____eligible, did not vote
_____other (specifiy_____)	_____cannot remember

12. Who did you vote for in 1960?

_____Kennedy	_____were not eligible to vote
_____Nixon	_____eligible, did not vote
_____other (specify_____)	_____cannot remember

13. List any organizations in which you are or have been active since January, 1943.

14. What is your marital status now?

<u> </u> single	<u> </u> divorced
<u> </u> married	<u> </u> widowed

15. Please list year of any marriages 1943 on.

16. Please list year of any divorces 1943 on.

17. Please list year in which you were widowed 1943 on.

18. If you married from 1943 on, were you in the WAC when you met your husband?

19. Was he in WWII service when you met him? In other words, was it your service in the WAC that led to your meeting him?

20. Please list the years that any children you had 1943 on were born.

VII. Section Seven: Personal Commentary

On this page I would like to have you tell me any interesting stories, feelings or thoughts you have about the WAC. I'd be interested in anything you'd like to tell. If you have more to say than fits on this page add another-the more the better! I'd like to hear things about special events that happened, people you met, things that were especially meaningful or moving to you.

Also, just to ask again. If you have any diaries, letters, scrapbooks etc. that you'd be willing to share all or part of with me, I'd be very interested. Several women have already done this. They have sent me the material, I have it copied and send it back to them. Some have sent me everything, others have selected-out items they'd rather not have me see. The more you can send the better, but I understand there may be some private matters in letters, for example. But do not not send me things because you think I wouldn't be interested in them. I am interested in all parts of your WAC experience. Thanks again.

Hello!

Several of you wrote at Christmas, wondering if I had disappeared off the face of the earth! Sorry about the delay, but last July I finished my Masters course work and almost immediately was offered an archival job on Long Island, New York, which I took. With moving and beginning to work full-time, I haven't gotten much done on the thesis. But once again the time is right, and once again I need your help.

First, several of you have requested that I send a list of names and addresses of those of you I have found, which I am more than glad to do. But I wouldn't want to give out the name and address of anyone who did not want it distributed. So please return the first sheet which follows, marking the appropriate boxes.

The second sheet is the last section of my questionnaire, and it deals with several delicate topics. I left it to the last so that you could send it in anonymously if you so wished. Simply fold it up separately from the sheet regarding the addresses, and don't put your name on it unless you want to. I promise I will set them all to one side away from the envelopes so I will have no way of knowing whose any particular one is unless you tell me.

I am asking these questions on sexual attitudes for one simple reason: in all the reading I have done about the WAC, these questions have been explored. In order to maintain the intellectual quality of my thesis I must attempt to deal with these issues. The way you could help me the most is to answer this last section and put your name on it. Even if you do that I will not use specific examples in my thesis (i.e. "Mary Jones lost her virginity in Italy."). Rather I will be able to say things like "Of my study group the sexual attitudes of 10% of the women over 30 became more liberal, while 52% of those under 30 did so". Please believe me, I am not trying to snoop into your private lives. Help me only so far as you feel comfortable.

I will be returning to William and Mary for a week in the middle of March to do computer work on my thesis. If you could possibly return your answers within three weeks, I would greatly appreciate it. And I could send out the list of names and addresses also. As always I thank you ahead of time for your help, and do hope the New Year is going well. Hoping to hear from you soon,

Yours,



Social Relations

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1. How would you say your experience in the WAC effected your attitudes toward what constituted proper social relationships between men and women? For example, a woman who before the WAC wouldn't even casually kiss a man might afterward feel at ease doing so; someone else may have become involved in their first love affair. Either woman would probably have become more liberal in her attitudes. Or perhaps you became more conservative. I simply want your opinion on how your feelings changed.

_____became much more liberal
_____became somewhat more liberal
_____remained the same
_____became more conservative

2. To what degree did you experience sexual pressure (unwanted attempts to convince you to engage in some type of physical relationship) from allied servicemen (including Americans)?

_____much pressure
_____some pressure
_____none at all

The next five questions are the ones I am afraid will make you uncomfortable. Please answer them if you can. Again I am not trying to snoop. It is simply that the question of service-women's attitudes toward sex is one that appears in all the reading I have done, and to do my study justice, I must ask them.

3. Prior to joining the WAC had you ever engaged in pre-marital or extra-marital sex?
4. Did you have pre-marital or extra-marital sex while in the WAC?
5. Have you had pre-marital or extra-marital sex since you've been out of the WAC?
6. While in the WAC did you know for a fact of any lesbian relationships within the corps?
7. While in the WAC did you hear rumours of lesbian relationships within the corps?

APPENDIX C

Wac Home States and States of Residence used in
Obtaining Census Averages: 1920, 1940, and 1980

<u>1920</u>		<u>1940</u>	
Alabama	North Dakota	Alabama	New York
Idaho	Ohio	California	Ohio
Kentucky	Oklahoma	Idaho	Oklahoma
Louisiana	Pennsylvania	Kentucky	Oregon
Nevada	Texas	Louisiana	Pennsylvania
New Hampshire	Washington	Nevada	Washington
New York	Wisconsin	New Hampshire	Wisconsin
<u>1980</u>			
Alabama		New York	
California		Ohio	
Connecticut		Oklahoma	
Florida		Oregon	
Hawaii		Pennsylvania	
Iowa		Texas	
Maryland		Washington	
Montana			

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